



that man's most pressing duties regard the earth in which his lot has been cast; and in the study of this world, and in the discharge of those duties, he will assuredly find abundant scope for the exercise of his highest faculties:—

Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um,  
Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.—GÖTTE.

We seem as yet but on the threshold, as it were, of civilisation. It is probable that man is far from having reached the limits of intellectual, social, or moral development, and it is certain that he has by no means exhausted the infinite capabilities of external nature. There are many things that are not yet dreamt of in our philosophy. Everywhere there is in this world progress and development. Such appears to have been its law from the beginning. Whether we are to refer the changes which are observable in successive periods of time to successive exertions of creative power or to progressive development, we have abundant evidence that amelioration has been ever going on. Such has been the history of this earth hitherto, and it would be against all analogy to suppose that the process of improvement has reached its term. Social and other changes are continually in progress, whether we observe them or not; and in giving these a useful direction and impulse much may be done by individual energy, ever sustained by faith in a law of good, of the working of which we see traces on every side evolving a new and better age out of the old; and to do our part, however humble, in effecting these changes for the general good—not neglecting, meanwhile, to strew our path so far as we may with flowers, and to enjoy our present share of the blessings around us—is the great business of life.\*

\* We should all of us do well to follow the example of Bacon in his zeal for advancing the progress of the world. 'Believing,' he says, in his preface to the *De Interpretatione Naturæ*, 'that I was born for the service of mankind, and regarding the

# THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH

‘The plain truth is,’ as observed in an article in *Fraser’s Magazine* for March 1869, ‘that all human religions are divisible into two classes—those which teach that God is capable, and those which teach that He is utterly incapable, of what men think moral evil. There is no use in endeavouring to draw any other line. The question is one of yes or no : either our rule of right is absolutely identical with the Divine rule or it is not. If it is not, there is no saying how far it may differ. It will not do to argue that God may be capable of what in a man you would think imperfection, but must be utterly incapable of what in a man you would think monstrous wickedness. If you believe in a God who once sanctioned fraud or immorality, you can have no good reason for refusing to believe in the possibility of such a god as Moloch or Juggernaut.’ (p. 313.)

It is a minor matter, but it is worthy of being noted, that a low and selfish spirit breathes through the religion of the older Jewish Scriptures. Everything is matter of bargain between Jehovah and His people. Because thou hast done this, I will do that. If thou wilt do this I will do the other. Nothing is to be done because it is right.

Along with the blemishes which have been pointed out, it cannot be denied that we find in the Hebrew Scriptures religious sentiment of the loftiest kind, sublime views of the moral character of God, His love of righteousness, His hatred of injustice and oppression ; moral apologues of great beauty, evincing a profound knowledge of the human heart ; the whole constituting a storehouse to which statesmen and moralists may resort

*Third.* Robbers seize the camels and *kill the servants.*

*Fourth.* A house is blown down and *all Job’s children crushed to death.*

It does not seem to have occurred to the Hebrew mind that there was anything shocking in all these slaughters perpetrated by way of making trial of Job’s constancy.



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with our purest nature ; much that still satisfies the highest requirements of our minds, and ministers to our holiest feelings. Its beautiful apologues, its divine psalmody, its strange legendary history of a people that has played so remarkable a part in the history of the world, will cause it ever to be looked upon as one of the most interesting and venerable monuments of antiquity.

The conflict between the teaching of the Old and the New Testament has sorely perplexed divines ; things being tolerated in the old law which are positively forbidden in the New Testament. It has been attempted to get over this difficulty by supposing the revelation to have been gradual—suited from time to time to the intelligence and needs of the people. No doubt there was a progressive development of more worthy ideas concerning God ; and conduct which in an early age was represented as approved of or sanctioned by the Deity was what in a more advanced age was deemed displeasing to Him. This is a simple and satisfactory explanation of the apparently contradictory views of the Deity in the earlier and later portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, if we suppose the Bible written by fallible men ; but it is fatal to the notion of its being inspired throughout by Divine intelligence.

It has been a favourite practice to contemplate the human race in its succession through the course of ages as one man always learning. Pascal seems first to have suggested this idea, and it is taken up and developed in the ingenious fragment of Lessing, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, where he supposes that what education is to the individual, revelation is to the whole race ; and he endeavours to explain away the imperfect morality and other imperfections in the earlier teaching of the Old Testament on the plea that sounder and higher teaching

THE PROBLEM  
OF  
THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH  
RECONSIDERED

*IN THREE LETTERS TO A FRIEND*

BY  
A SEPTUAGENARIAN

---

‘Der Mensch ist nicht geboren die Probleme der Welt zu lösen, wohl  
aber zu suchen wo das Problem angeht und sich sodann in der Grenze  
des Begreiflichen zu halten’  
GÖTTE

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## PREFACE.

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THE OCCASION of my writing these Letters may be explained in a few words.

In reflecting on the condition of man in this life it is impossible not to be struck with the large amount of privation and suffering which are the lot of the great mass of mankind, in contrast with the boundless provision which the constitution of the world seems to offer for their comfort and happiness. I was naturally led to consider what had been the influence of the Church in this matter. Is the way in which the Church (under any of its phases) professes to account for this painful state of things satisfactory? Has our National Church, with its vast establishment, had any sensible effect in correcting or alleviating this sad condition of our countrymen? If it be true that these questions can be answered only in the negative, what is the explanation of this lamentable failure? Are we not bound to inquire whether the theory on which our National Church (in common with the churches of other denominations) is founded is sound, and whether it is calculated to promote the well-being and progress of mankind in this world?

In determining to publish the conclusions at which I have arrived in answer to these questions, I have thought that I ought not to be deterred from doing so by the fear of disturbing people's minds, because I felt sure that few persons would be likely to read the Letters whose minds were not unsettled already. To such persons I am not without hope that the views which I have suggested may have the effect, in some degree, of relieving their present perplexity, by showing that if, as the result of their inquiries, they should be compelled to abandon a creed which, however it may have been cherished in times past, is no longer in harmony with the age, they may still find that all is not barren, and that there remains an ample field for the exercise of our highest faculties, our noblest virtues, and our holiest affections.

*November 1871.*

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## LETTER I.

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MY DEAR —,

You will not be surprised to see these letters addressed to you if you call to mind the long talks we used to have on that occasion when we were thrown much together, now more years ago than I like to remember (seeing that we had then both of us reached the allotted age of man), on the problem of the world and man's destiny here, and the unsatisfactory character of the solution of this great problem offered by the Church in any of its phases,—and if you remember the intention I then expressed, if ever I should have leisure for the purpose, of one day putting in order and publishing my thoughts on this all-engrossing subject, in the hope that I might perhaps be able to lighten in some degree the perplexities which are troubling so many excellent people among us, and do something towards clearing the way at least for the admission of sounder views than, as it appears to me, now generally prevail of the Divine government of the world.

I have not failed to consider the objection urged by you to the public discussion of these high subjects, from the danger of unsettling people's minds, and undermining the principles which, whether well founded or not, are the mainstay of their moral being. This danger exists undoubtedly: there will always be some persons who will be liable to suffer from this cause.

It is the Nemesis of the false system in which they have been educated ; but there would be an end to all progress if, from the fear of this temporary and partial evil, we should abstain from the discussion of truths of vital importance to mankind. Changes of opinion, however ultimately valuable, are rarely sources of unmixed good. Some degree of partial evil seems a necessary incident of the great law of progress in this world, ever working on from a lower to a higher condition of things.

I am convinced that, in religion as in all other subjects, the prevalence of what is true must ultimately be for the general good, and any temporary and partial evil that may arise from the disturbance of established opinions, or from the dissemination even of erroneous opinions in the search after truth, is more than compensated by the ultimate benefit to society that results from the discussion. There is no infallible test by which we can distinguish the true from the false, and it is only by allowing unlimited inquiry and discussion that we can have any certainty of having got at the truth. We may regret that there is no infallible test, or judge, of the truth, but we must take the world as we find it. The Almighty has so ordained it, and we have only to submit. To refuse to discuss what is opposed to our cherished doctrines is to violate that law of our nature by which the search after truth is made the condition of all progress in the world.

I can sympathise with the sentiment of those favourite lines of yours—

Leave thou thy sister, when she prays,  
Her early heaven and cheerful views,  
Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse  
A life that leads melodious days.—TENNYSON.

We cannot but feel sorrow that these cheerful views should ever be exposed to disturbance. In the seclusion of a convent it were perhaps possible to guard against the intrusion

of all disturbing influences; but in the outer world, as society is now constituted, it is a thing not to be hoped for. And seeing how much there is in this mysterious world of ours that, with our present limited faculties, it is not given to us to comprehend, and how many important questions there are on which, with every disposition to arrive at the truth, some degree of doubt must necessarily rest, we cannot too soon begin to learn the lesson of acquiescing tranquilly in doubt, in those cases in which certainty is not to be attained. As Miss Emily Shirreff well remarks, in her *Thoughts on Self-Culture*: ‘When the young mind has been thoroughly impressed with the nature and extent of the difficulties in forming opinions, and of the value of probability as our only guide in so many momentous questions, it is time to inculcate a sad, perhaps, but necessary lesson, viz., acquiescence in doubt, as the inevitable condition of our earthly existence. . . . We may make to ourselves, if we please, a panoply of prejudices, and say we are satisfied and certain; but we cannot, even when we wish it, be always proof against reason, and once let our artificial defence be overthrown, we are cast into a sea of perplexities and rendered miserable because we have lost the certainty we had deemed a virtue. There is but one true refuge: we must learn to bear doubt in order to exclude despair.’ (p. 223.)

To proceed to my more immediate subject: What cannot fail to strike anyone who bestows even a small amount of attention on what is passing around him in the world is the large amount of privation and suffering which are the lot of the great mass of the human race.

Not less striking, though not so obvious at the first view, is the fact that of this suffering a great part might be avoided altogether, and nearly the whole might be alleviated, if only

the necessary means, not beyond the reach of man, were resorted to. A very little observation will show that it mainly proceeds either from ignorance or neglect of the laws which God has ordained for the government of the world. The world, or that portion of it at least in which our lot has been cast, is indeed, as Wordsworth felt in his serener moments, 'full of blessings,' if we would but take the appointed means to make them our own.

Disease and poverty are the two most common forms of suffering.

As to the former, it cannot be doubted that the greater part proceeds from intemperance, privation, imperfect acquaintance with the human frame and constitution, and ignorance or neglect of sanitary precautions—in short, from causes that are remediable.

As to the latter, viz., poverty, the political economists assure us that, with the almost unlimited command over the productive powers of Nature which advancing science has unfolded and is going on to unfold, the labouring classes, under due limitation of their numbers, might, but for the prevalence of vices which are mainly the offspring of ignorance, be fed, housed, and clothed with only such a moderate amount of labour as is conducive to health and enjoyment, and as would leave to them ample leisure for the pleasures arising from moral and intellectual cultivation.

Why, then, does poverty exist? It is not an inevitable condition of human society. There is nothing in the constitution of Nature to make it impossible for all to have moderate labour and sufficient means, and to lead happy and virtuous lives. That this is not the lot of humanity is the result of individual and social vices that might be eradicated.

It is no doubt true that the poor often, and it may perhaps

be said generally, suffer from the fault of previous generations—their improvidence, intemperance, or other vices. The sins of the fathers are visited on the children: but this does not affect the truth of the general proposition. It does not show that these faults might not have been corrected at an earlier stage, or that they may not be corrected for the future. There is nothing in the constitution of things to make such an improved condition of the working classes as that suggested impossible. Not indeed that it could be realised suddenly, or before the lapse of perhaps many generations, when there shall have been time for the thorough reformation which might be effected in the masses of the people if a sound and enlightened education, physical, moral, and religious, were brought home to them.\*

Why is it, then, that so much wretchedness and suffering are allowed to exist in the world? Here we are in the latter half of the nineteenth century from the commencement of the era which was to inaugurate the regeneration of mankind, and yet, with the infinite resources of Nature at our command, and the great capacity for happiness implanted in man, the world is full of misery. There is surely something wrong in the system under which this state of things has been brought about and is allowed to continue.

In our perplexity we naturally direct our attention first to the Church,† which we have been taught to look up to as our

\* If there be any truth in Mr. Darwin's great theory, and in the doctrine of *hereditary genius* propounded by Mr. Galton, and illustrated with so much ingenuity and research, what improvement may we not reasonably look forward to from the influence of education in a series of generations, even to the extent of developing an improved type of the race. At present the pauperised masses of the people, living in ignorance, demoralisation and vice, are left to propagate, unrestrained, their own bad kind.

† The greater part of the remarks in these letters have reference especially to the Anglican Established Church. It is the national Church established and

guide and instructor in all our most important concerns. What has been its action on the progress of the world and the happiness of mankind? Startling as the avowal must appear, we can hardly help arriving at the conclusion that the Church has been rather a hindrance than a helper in the great business of humanity, and that she is in a great degree responsible for the fact that so small progress has been made.

How little, with its vast wealth and authority, and its almost unlimited control over the education of the country, the Church has done towards enlightening the world and improving the condition of humanity, is matter of common observation and regret. Of the progress that has been made in the last few centuries, but especially in the last half century, how small is the share for which the Church can claim the credit! 'Let anyone,' as remarked some time ago in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 'who is acquainted with the general course of thought throughout Europe for the last two centuries, ask himself honestly to what extent the Church of England has accepted, thrown into practical forms, and enforced on the minds of the people at large, the truths which have been brought to light during that period? Whether it has been the home and haunt in this country of all those great principles which have so much altered and improved the state of affairs here and elsewhere? Whether it exercises over the leading minds of the country that influence which is at once the test of the force of teaching and the highest reward of the teacher?' Can any one great movement in the progress of mankind be pointed out in which the Church has taken a leading part?

regulated by Act of Parliament, and is endowed with great wealth. In these respects it differs from the various bodies of Nonconformists as well as the Roman Catholic Church in these realms. But the objection which I make to the supernatural theory on which it is founded, and the spirit by which it is consequently actuated, applies with equal force to nearly all those other bodies.



Its attention has ever been diverted from matters really conducive to the welfare of mankind to engage in some contest about disputed theological dogmas—to protest against the elevation to the episcopal bench of some divine whose opinions are suspected to be not of the true orthodox stamp—to settle the terms on which the education of the people may be tolerated, or to discuss some such question as that which shook the Church to its foundations between Mr. Gorham and the late Bishop of Exeter on the subject of baptismal regeneration; or, more lamentable still, wrangle about the vestments or the postures and position of the clergyman during the celebration of the Lord's Supper.\*

Unhappily, the theory on which the Church proceeds is calculated rather to impede than to promote man's happiness and well-being in this world. It assumes that this world is a fallen world, and man's position in it merely a state of preparation for another and better state of existence; that man's happiness here is a matter comparatively of little moment, and that his main business on earth is to qualify himself for happiness in that future state. It further assumes that there is some incompatibility between the pursuit of happiness and well-being in this world and the conditions of attaining to happiness in the next. The question is not whether there is a future life or not, which is assumed in nearly all views of religion, but whether, in order to gain that future life, we are to sacrifice all that to an

\* According to *Fraser's Magazine*, April 1871, 'the questions about which the clergy are most desperately in earnest at the present day are such as these: Whether they may mix water with the sacramental wine; whether, during the consecration of the elements, they may stand at the north end of the west side or must stand at the proper north side of the altar; whether they may wear certain garments known as capes, albs, and tunicles, or must confine themselves to a white surplice; whether they may burn incense, or light tapers, or wear a cap called a biretta; at what precise angle they may bend their knees without being convicted of kneeling; and how high they may raise the consecrated elements without being guilty of a technical elevation.' (p. 458.)

intelligent, high-minded, and reasonable man makes this life of any value.

To employ the faculties that God has given us in endeavouring to discover His laws as displayed in His works, and to do His will by devoting all our energies to improve the condition of mankind and to alleviate the misery so prevalent in the world, and which mainly arises from ignorance or neglect of those laws; to endeavour by honest labour to raise ourselves in the scale of society—this, it is said, although it may be conducive to man's happiness and well-being here, is not the way to prepare for a future life. We are to renounce this world—to lay up no treasures here. Riches are the root of evil; the elements of progress and civilisation are matters of secondary moment. Our task here is to endeavour, by patience, humility, repentance, faith in the Redeemer, and through the efficacy of the sacraments of the Church, to secure eternal happiness in Heaven. That is the assumption of the Church. If it be correct, the more zealous the clergy are, and the more faithful in the discharge of their duties, the more will they endeavour to withdraw attention from what concerns the temporal interests of those committed to their charge, in order to fix it the more steadily on that which alone, if the Church's theory be true, is of real worth—the securing of their happiness in a future life.

It may perhaps be said that though this is the theory of the Church, yet, in practice, it does not discourage a reasonable attention to the affairs of this world; and it is true that there is a great deal of inconsistency between the theory and the practice of the Church. The clergy do not themselves practise, nor do they expect their hearers to practise, all that the theory of the Church requires them to profess. There is a great deal of conventional insincerity; but this very insincerity is one of

the serious evils arising out of the artificial system with which the Church is encumbered. It goes far to explain the discredit into which the Church has fallen with the working classes especially, and the powerlessness of the clergy to make any impression by their teaching.

The Church being committed to a dogmatic system, many of the doctrines of which are avowedly such as cannot now be maintained, and others of them such as may be shown to be hostile to the best interests of humanity, it finds itself in a false position. The dogmas being assumed to have been divinely inspired, and therefore to be absolute and unchangeable truth, they cannot be varied from age to age, so as to bring them into harmony with the growing intelligence of mankind; and it becomes necessary, therefore, to pretend at least to bring the belief of the age into harmony with the dogmas. This is the task which the Church undertakes, and hence it arises that its proceedings are characterised by habitual insincerity, a habit fatal to all genuine honesty of character.\*

If this theory of man's mission on earth is well founded; if the future world is all in all, and man's condition here of no account, except as fitting him for that future and higher state of existence; if, indeed, this be the true solution of the world's

\* We have a remarkable instance of the kind of conventional insincerity that so generally pervades clerical language in the proceedings of the late Pan-Anglican Synod. In the address issued by that body 'to the faithful in Christ Jesus,' the associated bishops say: 'Brethren beloved, with one voice we warn you the time is short; the Lord cometh: watch and be sober.' Now this language was evidently meant to call to mind similar language recorded in the Gospel, and which there was used to signify the belief that the world was actually coming to an end, and that Christ was about to reappear—a belief then really entertained, and to which, probably, more than anything else, was owing the wonderfully rapid spread of Christianity soon after the death of Jesus. But it may be doubted whether the bishops were consciously insincere in issuing the address, although not one of the seventy-five really entertained the sentiment which their language was calculated, and no doubt intended, to awaken.

problem, and of man's existence here, we have only to go on in the same direction as heretofore, and simply aim at such minor reforms as may enable the Church to accomplish more effectually its appointed work. But people are beginning to doubt this. The truth is opening upon men's minds that there is more in this world than those who have taken upon themselves to be the guides and instructors of mankind in their highest concerns are willing to admit—that the hereafter is not all in all—that the earth is God's as well as the heavens, and that religion is something more than a scheme for rescuing a select number of favoured individuals from the wreck of a fallen world, not for any merits of their own, but through faith in a mysterious scheme of redemption, and in the efficacy of certain so-called sacraments, of which the Church professes to be the sole depositary.

It must not be supposed that those who are unable to accept the Church's solution of the world's problem therefore call in question a Divine government of the world, or undervalue the influence of religion. The difference between them (a large section of them at least) and the Church is rather as to the *mode* of the Divine government. Shortly indicated, the distinction may be said to be that, according to the one view, the Divine government is conducted by general and invariable laws, and that by a careful observation and study of the facts of the world we may be able to discover these laws, and in some degree to understand the scheme of the Divine government, and to learn to know the will of God and to do it: according to the other view, the government of the world is conducted, not by general and invariable laws, but, in great measure at least, by special and direct interference of God from time to time, not uninfluenced by the prayers and intercessions addressed to Him

by the Church or by individuals. A knowledge of the will of God, according to this theory, is not to be sought in a study of His works, and the investigation of the laws by which they are regulated, but in the written record of a Revelation which it is alleged that in an early stage of the world's existence, God made to a nation specially favoured by Him; and that in this revelation are disclosed the terms and conditions on which alone the fallen race of man can escape the eternal misery which, in consequence of the fault of our first parents, awaits all who fail to comply with the conditions so revealed; and that the great business of the Church is to make known these terms and conditions, and to prevail with mankind to comply with them, and so to become reconciled with God and to escape the wrath to come.

It must by no means be supposed that, if it should appear that the received scheme of revealed religion is not founded in truth, religion is therefore banished from the world. The spiritual and permanent element of religion, apart from dogma—that which may be called the Religion of Nature, the desire to know and to do the will of God—will still remain, and, being no longer incumbered with a creed which has ceased to be vital, will, for the great end of religion—the elevation and improvement of our nature and faculties—exert a higher and purer influence, in harmony from time to time with the intelligence and spirit of the age.

Religion is not an affair of creeds and articles and canonical books; it is a principle rooted in our nature, growing with the growth of our moral and intellectual constitution—a feeling of reverence for something greater and better than ourselves, the striving of the soul after communion with God, strengthening and sanctioning our feeling of duty, and capable, if well directed, of influencing our conduct for good more powerfully

than any other agency, or, if perverted, of producing just the contrary effect. It is a Divine influence, elevating, refining, and softening, whilst giving strength to the human character, but in no degree conflicting with what tends to advance man's well-being on this earth, his material not less than his spiritual well-being. Whilst fostering the highest and purest virtues of the human heart, its true spirit will lead to an active life of beneficence, of devotion, love, self-control, and cheerful sacrifice. The various religious systems that have from time to time prevailed on the face of the earth—Brahminical, Buddhist, Christian, Mahometan, and others—are but the various modes in which the religious sentiment common to all men has sought to give expression to itself, in more or less permanent forms, in the different ages and countries of the world.

Nor can it be admitted, as it is apt to be assumed, that there is anything more spiritual or more elevating to the character in the view presented by revealed religion than in that contemplated by the Religion of Nature.

Take first the case of the sincere professor of revealed religion according to the orthodox view. He beholds with sorrow and humble resignation the universal prevalence of vice and misery in the world. He has been taught that this wretched condition of mankind is the consequence of the sin of our first parents, which has in some mysterious way caused the utter depravity of human nature, and the consequent eternal misery of the whole human race, from which there is no escape by any effort of its own; that the only chance of salvation proceeds from faith in a mysterious covenant of redemption, entered into at some remote period in the world's history, between the first and second persons of the Trinity, God the Father and God the Son, whereby the guilt of

such persons as truly repent and hold this faith is transferred to God the Son, and His righteousness is imputed to the true believers; and that the great business of life (infinitely the most important, and before which all others shrink into utter insignificance), is to embrace and hold fast this faith ourselves, and to bring it home to the hearts of all whom we can influence, and so to rescue them from eternal perdition.

That, I think, is a fair statement of the condition and prospects of man under the Christian scheme of revealed religion, as professed by the Anglican Church and the various bodies of orthodox Nonconformists, as well as by the Roman Catholic Church.

Then take the case of the believer in God as revealed in His works, considered for the moment apart from the question of his prospects in a future state of existence, as to which I shall be prepared to contend, by-and-bye, that the believer in natural religion is in a happier position than his orthodox brother. He beholds with sorrow the great amount of misery and vice in the world, but on careful observation and study he is convinced that a large proportion of this evil is remediable—that it proceeds from ignorance and neglect of the laws (unwritten, indeed, but not the less revealed to the careful observer) which God has ordained for the government of the world. From the great preponderance of good in the world he is convinced of the benevolence of the Creator. He is satisfied that on the whole good prevails; that the very freedom of man, although the cause of failure and evil, is also a necessary element of progress; and that there are no limits to this progress—no limits to the possible diminution of vice and misery, or to the possible increase of well-being and well-doing, if man would but take the means which God has placed at his disposal of accomplishing this

blessed consummation. Strong in this persuasion, he shares the faith of the Laureate—

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill.

But he feels that it is not by indulging the degrading belief of the utter depravity and helplessness of human nature, and by looking elsewhere than to our own exertions for improvement, that any good is to be done. He feels that, whether for the individual man or for society, all depends on their own efforts—that God helps those that help themselves, and that it only depends on themselves, each exerting himself in the limited province allotted to him, to effect a regeneration of the society to which he belongs, and ultimately of the world. In this faith he resolves to walk, confident that when man shall have done his part the blessing of God will not be wanting.

His high endeavours are an inward light  
That keeps the path before him always bright.—WORDSWORTH.

Surely there is no absence of elevation in views like these ; nor need this scheme of creation and of man's mission on earth shrink from comparison with the established system of the day. What higher religious duty to God can man perform than that of employing all his faculties in seeking to know and do His will ; what more acceptable service can he render to his Creator than that of helping on and cheering and, so far as lies in his power, blessing his fellow man ?

It must by no means therefore be supposed that religion is at an end because good and enlightened men in the present age are unable to believe in the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ; nor need it be doubted that they may have as lively a faith in the existence and overruling providence of God as any of the patriarchs of old, though no longer in a form contradictory to reason and experience.



The unworthy ideas of God and His government of the universe generated in the Hebrew mind, and so passing into the Christian world, must indeed, through the influence of a higher cultivation, be replaced by ideas more appropriate to a great and wise and good Being. But the devotional feelings which are ineradicable will not be the less fitted to raise and purify the heart and to strengthen the moral nature, because drawing their inspiration from more enlightened views of the attributes of the Creator. The religious feelings not less than the moral are capable of cultivation; they may be refined and elevated or vulgarised and degraded according to the notions that are entertained of the Supreme Being and of man's relations to Him; and seeing how much the conduct of men is influenced by their religious belief, it is of the highest moment that the religion should be founded on just and elevated views of God and His government of the world.\* As Miss Cobbe eloquently observes—‘A purer theology freeing God's character from miserable blots, ever advancing science adding each hour a fresh verse to the endless psalm, glorifying the wisdom and goodness displayed in His creation; these have given us the new doctrine which is destined to affect beneficently every department of human life. The moment men receive it thoroughly, the idea of a perfect life must thenceforth be the idea of a life developing every faculty of the mind, every power of the body, every holy affection of the heart of man.’ (*Dawning Lights*, p. 148.)

There is further this advantage attending a religion founded on a careful observation of the works of God, that when once it shall have taken possession of the public mind all will thence-

\* ‘Einen Gott erkennen, sich die würdigsten Begriffe von ihm zu machen suchen, auf diese würdigsten Begriffe bei allen unsern Handlungen und Gedanken Rücksicht nehmen, ist der vollständigste Inbegriff aller natürlichen Religion.’—LESSING.

forward be in harmony with Nature. We shall no longer dread, as now, every step in the advance of scientific knowledge; no discoveries in geology, astronomy, or criticism can then do aught but strengthen the grounds of religious faith. Religion and philosophy will thenceforward go hand in hand; the business of philosophy being to search out and determine the principles which are to regulate our conduct, and that of religion to sanction and enforce them in practical life.

It is of the utmost moment that our duties should be associated with and made to rest upon a religion that is not liable to be discredited, as must be the case with a religion constituted of immutable dogmas derived from supposed traditional facts of a supernatural character like that which prevails in modern Europe. The dogmas losing, as in time they are sure to do, their hold on the minds of men, the sense of duty and religion is too apt to fall with them, as at the present time we see fatally exemplified among large masses of the population both in this country and on the Continent. The Church is naturally perplexed and alarmed at this state of things, and is casting about for support. Bible 'Commentaries' and 'Christian Evidence Societies' are accordingly set on foot in the vain hope of proping up the falling edifice. And for a while they will no doubt prevail, and will break the fall which ultimately is inevitable. That the clerical body should resort to expedients of this character is only natural; but statesmen (and there are some laymen connected with this movement aspiring to that character) might be expected to take a larger view, and to see that the time is come when the wise course is to cease from attempting to defend what is no longer defensible, and to look out for new and surer foundations on which to rest the religion and morals of the world.\*

\* 'Il n'est pas impossible,' says Montesquieu, 'd'attaquer une religion révélée parce qu'elle existe par des faits particuliers, et que les faits par leur nature peuvent

Whatever form the religious sentiment implanted within us may hereafter take, and whatever influence it is destined to exercise on the progress of the world, it cannot be doubted that the existing Church of the civilised world no longer exerts the same authority as heretofore over the minds of men. In England a large proportion of the more intelligent working classes have almost wholly ceased to attend its ministrations; and among the higher classes, although perhaps the majority formally attend the Church services and use the conventional language of conformity, any real or sincere belief in the old orthodox Anglican doctrine is much less prevalent than is generally supposed. There are signs on every side that religion is passing through one of those stages of change that have occurred at several periods of its history, and that one of the great moral revolutions of the world is at hand. Old beliefs are being shaken all over Europe, and the Church is gradually losing its hold upon the classes which formerly yielded to it an unwavering obedience. Progress is the great law of the world, and theology is not exempt from its influence.\*

But the coming change is something very different from and is destined to go much deeper than the Reformation brought about by Luther, which was a moral rather than an intellectual movement. Reason and science are the agencies now brought to bear in the place of passion and faith, and the blessings which the new Reformation promises to confer on humanity are

*être une matière de dispute. Mais il n'en est pas de même de la religion naturelle; elle est tirée de la nature de l'homme, dont on ne peut pas disputer, et du sentiment intérieur de l'homme, dont on ne peut pas disputer encore.'*

\* What can be more striking than the utter antagonism between the views of creation and of the origin of life recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, and forming part of the orthodox creed of the Church, and those propounded and discussed of late years by the leading men of science of the day, Darwin, Huxley, Lyell, Tyndall, and others scarcely less distinguished, at the meetings of the British Association, and assented to, or at least passively approved, by every one having any claim to scientific knowledge?

of a widely different character from those which Luther aimed at. Luther's great struggle was with the flagrant abuses of the Church of Rome; and in the course of this struggle he insisted on and established the great principle of the right of appeal to private judgment in matters of religion, and for this the Christian world is for ever indebted to him;\* but his theological doctrines were not more reasonable, and they were in some respects more pernicious, than those which he sought to overthrow. To the philosophical mind of Wieland it appeared that the Reformation had been an evil rather than a good: it had he thought, retarded the progress of philosophy for centuries. There were intelligent men among the Italians who, if they had been permitted, would have effected a salutary reform, had not Luther ruined everything by making the people a party when it ought to have been left to the scholars. But for his furious attacks on the Church, and the succession of horrible wars in Europe which they excited, liberty, science, and humanity would have slowly made their way. Melancthon and Erasmus were in the right road, but the violence of the age was triumphant.†

At the Reformation the dogma of the infallibility of the Church of Rome and the Pope was renounced by Protestant Christendom; but still it was assumed that in religion there must be some infallible guide, and the Bible was accepted instead of the Church and the Pope, the province of reason being limited to the interpretation of this infallible guide. Within these limits it was admitted that the human reason

\* 'The Reformation,' Miss Cobbe remarks in a paper in the *Fortnightly Review* for August 1871, 'laid the train of thought which is even now exploding, one after another, all the strongholds of superstition. The inkstand which Luther threw at the devil at Wartburg proved to be a true prophetic symbol; for the black fluid has done more to extinguish the powers of darkness than all the holy water of the saints ever accomplished.' (p. 188.)

† Conversations with H. C. Robinson. *Diary*, i. 110.

was supreme. But now Protestantism has entered on a further stage. The infallibility of the Bible is in its turn questioned, and the claim is being made for the supremacy of reason in the question of religion as in all other matters. It is against this claim that the Protestant Churches are making their last struggle.

It does not seem to be clearly agreed among Protestants how far the great principle on which they separated from the Church of Rome, viz., the supremacy of the Bible *as interpreted by private judgment*, may legitimately be carried. The Bible, as Burke has observed, 'is a most venerable but multifarious collection of the records of the divine economy; a collection of an infinite variety of cosmogony, theology, history, prophecy, psalmody, morality, apologue, allegory, legislation, ethics, carried through different books by different authors at different ages, for different ends and purposes.' Is the Protestant to be at liberty to reject historical statements which he is satisfied are untrue? or statements in cosmogony which are at variance with the now established truths in geology and astronomy? or moral teachings which are disapproved by wise and good men of the present age?

If he may reject these, are any limits to be imposed on the exercise of his reason in judging of the truths said to be revealed in the Bible? Are there any *fundamental* points as to which he is not to be allowed to exercise his right of private judgment?

Dr. Temple, Bishop of Exeter, in his memorable speech in Convocation (as reported in the *Times*), in explanation of his having withdrawn his contribution to the *Essays and Reviews* from the editions to be hereafter issued, begins by laying down principles which would involve the right to call in question anything contained in the Bible, and consequently the

authority of the Bible itself. He says : ' I know it is natural to assume that the Church is first to *accept certain points as settled*, and then to go on to the investigation of other points ; but I am quite sure that in many cases it is simply impossible, and it would not be healthy if it were possible. I am quite sure that the belief *in the most fundamental points*, if once it were supposed that they were not to be investigated, would begin to lose its real vitality, and a belief without vitality appears to me to be not merely a negative but a most positive and real mischief.'

He presently, however, proceeds to assign limits to the permitted liberty of discussion. . . . ' I think,' he says, ' the discussion ought to be allowed the utmost freedom that can possibly be given to it *consistently with the acknowledgment of the Bible as the supreme revelation*.' If each part is allowed to be called in question it is difficult to understand how the acceptance of the whole can be more than a form ; one of the conventionalisms of the Church.

But the Church of England does not even enjoy the liberty of private judgment supposed to have been secured to every Protestant Church at the Reformation. What the Reformation was supposed to establish was the paramount supremacy of the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures and as interpreted by private judgment. According to the constitution of the Church of England as established by law, this right is not allowed either to the Church collectively or to the individual clergyman. Both are required to make their teaching conformable with the Thirty-nine Articles and the Prayer Book. They are not to investigate the truth, but to expound the doctrine prescribed in the Church formularies.

·Of the fact that the Church is losing its sway over mankind,

and that a disposition to call in question the fundamental dogmas of our own branch of it is rapidly spreading, there is abundant evidence. The Roman Catholic Archbishop Manning in his 'Pastoral' issued immediately before his departure to join the late Œcumenical Council at Rome (as reported in the *Times*) thus describes the present position of the Catholic Church:—

'What Government,' he asks, 'at this day professes to be Catholic? . . . . What country in Europe at this day recognises the unity and authority of the Catholic Church as a part of its public laws? What country has not by royal edicts, or legislative enactments, or revolutionary changes, abolished the legal *status* of the Catholic Church within its territory? As governments and nations they have by their own act withdrawn themselves from the unity of the Church. As moral or legal persons they are Catholics no longer.'

According to the *Times* correspondent at Berlin of the same period, a large proportion of the educated men and women in North Germany have practically ceased to believe in Christianity. 'No one,' he says, 'who knows modern Germany will call it a Christian land either in the sense Rome gives to the term or in the meaning Luther attached to it.' \*

\* Mr. Ernest de Bunsen, it is stated in the *Times* notice of a republication of this correspondent's letters (*Religious Thought in Germany: reprinted by permission from the Times, 1870*), admits that the Nicene Creed 'has entirely ceased to be a living power,' but he believes that a better kind of Christianity is embraced in its stead. Is this 'better kind of Christianity' the Christianity referred to by Miss Cobbe in her *Dawning Lights* as the Christianity of the Liberal party in our Church? 'Our modern Liberals,' she says, p. 10, 'may call it Christianity to believe in a righteous God, a beneficent Christ, a train of prophets and apostles inspired in like manner as Plato or Milton; a law of duty summed up in love to God and love to man, and a better life in store for all of us in the world to come: they may call all this Christianity, and exclude from it such doctrines as a devil, a hell, the creation in six days, the fall, original sin, atonement by blood, the infallibility of Scripture, the veracity of miracles, the reality of demoniacal possessions, the literal fulfilment of prophecy, the authenticity of the alleged discourses of Christ, a local heaven to which he ascended through the sky, the last judgment, and the final conflagration . . . I call their faith, not Christianity, but theism.'

Turning to England, I may mention, among the proofs that the old beliefs are giving way and that some change is at hand, the indisposition of men of ability to enter the Church of England, and the fact that several men have been induced to resign their position as clergymen, being no longer able conscientiously to hold and preach the required doctrine.

Conspicuous among these is Mr. W. G. Clark, late Public Orator in Cambridge University and Vice-Master of Trinity College. In stating to his diocesan his reasons for the step he has taken, Mr. Clark says he no longer thinks the infallibility of the Scriptures tenable—that ‘some portions of the Canonical Scriptures seem to him to be of doubtful genuineness, and others to contain erroneous statements in history, and questionable teaching in theology and morals.’ ‘There are passages,’ he says, ‘in the Liturgy which I cannot now repeat with full assent. I cannot stand beside the altar and say in the face of the congregation “God spake these words” when I am convinced He did not speak them.’ How many other clergymen are in the same position, but with less courage! What a perennial source of insincerity and pain!

The case of Mr. Sedley Taylor is another instance of a clergyman withdrawing from the ministry of the Church of England, involving the forfeiture of a fellowship in Trinity College, Cambridge; Mr. Taylor having been led, as he informs his diocesan in his letter of resignation, ‘to form convictions very much at variance with the formularies which bind the consciences of the English clergy.’

Having resigned his own position in the Church, Mr. Taylor points out, in an admirably reasoned pamphlet published by him,\* the unjustifiable character and injurious results of the system of subscription in the Church of England, and pleads

\* Macmillan, 1869.



with great force for restoring to those who remain in the ministry freedom of thought and utterance, not less in the interest of the Church itself than as being a right of which the clergy are unjustly deprived. 'A time is coming,' he says, 'when hereditary and traditional theology will have to pass through the fire of criticism, and when every thing which will not stand the test must be burned up. At such a crisis we shall need the aid of every competently informed man, and we cannot afford to be deprived of it by the benumbing force of antiquated legislation.' (p. 24.)

The following is the view of the Church of England doctrine and of the present critical position of the Church taken by a Clergyman who has not resigned his office in the Church: 'Have we not a right,' says Mr. Haweis, the Incumbent of St. James's, Westmoreland Street, Marylebone,\* 'to say that much of the old theology in this nineteenth century is no longer profitable doctrine but mere dogma—that we want some new expression of truth, and that our formularies and our conventional sermons and explanations are, in fact, exterminating religion, because they are keeping educated people out of our churches, driving the thoughtful and scientific world into opposition, and making enemies of those who should, of all others, be our friends? If the Church cannot utilise some of the best men of the age, the Church will go down; if the Church, which calls itself national, cannot use their enthusiasm, their learning, their love of truth, their philanthropy and their goodness, except in connection with one Shibboleth, so much the worse for the Church—the Church will have to go down. Those who, under the garb of a spurious piety, refuse to recognise facts—those who oppose themselves to

\* A sermon preached on Sunday morning June 18, 1871. Strahan & Co.

the voice of scientific, social and religious progress, will find themselves ere long in a very poor minority.' (p. 10.)

But the indications of revolt against the received opinions are not confined to the clergy. Many of the more thoughtful among the lay adherents of our Church are also coming to the conclusion that our religious code has become antiquated; that it no longer expresses the religious thought of the present day; and that if the Church is to retain its hold upon the minds of men religiously disposed—if it is to stimulate the vital action of religion instead of crushing it, it must begin by putting an end to the present system of tests and fall back upon the great central truths of Christianity. Even so sincere a Churchman as the Solicitor-General, Sir John Coleridge, seems prepared to admit this. In a paper read by him at Sion College on January 20, 1870, and subsequently published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for March in that year, after pointing out, not without regret, the false position of the Establishment, where, he says, 'the religious thought of devout men, within it and without, refuses to be expressed in phraseology three centuries old,' a state of things which, he says, he for one has long thought cannot continue, he goes on to say:—

'I see no reason why any one should desire its continuance. I see nothing in the Thirty-nine Articles themselves, nothing in the history of the men who are mainly responsible for them, which should give them a flavour of consecration, or induce us to forget the heavy price which year by year we pay for maintaining them. Some of our ablest men are relinquishing their Orders, finding the burthen which our documents impose on the conscience too great to be borne; many more, as our bishops tell us, will not undertake them. Many sign these documents, and at least outwardly in some sense or other profess to hold

them, whose real agreement with them must be of the vaguest kind, and whose position is inconsistent with a delicate sensibility to the claims of simple truth and a considerable scandal to those who have such sensibility. I do not much wonder that a distinguished man told a public meeting the other day that he believed our public morality and our national sense of truth and honour had suffered seriously from our system of imposing religious tests to an extent which rendered evasion of them practically necessary.' (p. 375.)

The opinion of Matthew Arnold, an earnest lay member of the Church (and it is chiefly from those outside the Establishment that we can expect to hear a frank expression of opinion on this question), coincides very much with that of Sir John Coleridge on the subject of dogma and subscription to tests. In his remarkable papers upon St. Paul and Protestantism, originally published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, he says: 'The Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles our generation will not improbably see the Prayer Book rid of.'\*

I am not so sanguine as Mr. Arnold, but it cannot be doubted that the whole fabric of dogmatism is tottering. Principal Shairp, of the United Colleges at St. Andrew's, in his *Culture and Religion* says: 'It needs no diviner to tell us that this century will not pass without a great breaking up of the dogmatic structures that have held ever since the Reformation or the succeeding age. From many sides at once a simplifying of the code, a revision of the standards, is being demanded. I will not ask whether this is good or bad, desirable or not. It is enough that it is inevitable.' (p. 92.)

\* Matthew Arnold gives up the orthodox distinction between natural and revealed religion. 'The difference between the two' he says, 'is not one of kind, only of degree. The real antithesis to natural and revealed alike is *invented, artificial*; religion springing out of an experience of the power, the grandeur, the necessity of righteousness, is revealed religion whether we find it in Sophocles or Isaiah; "the will of mortal men did not beget it, neither shall oblivion ever put it to sleep." *Cornhill* for July 1871, p. 43. The quotation is from Sophocles.

How completely the whole thing is out of joint, and how powerless is the Church to set it right, we had a remarkable exemplification in the proceedings of the *Pan-Anglican Synod* a few years back; a gathering of the leading men of the Anglican Church from all parts of the earth, a sort of Œcumenical Council, seventy-five bishops in all, called together, one must suppose, for some solemn promulgation of the truth in these troubled times. With what result? Simply the passing of a few trifling resolutions of an administrative character, without venturing to touch upon any of the great religious questions which are agitating the Church and the world.

The clergy of the Church of England are very much to be pitied in this matter. They are required on entering on the clerical office to express their belief in some hundreds of propositions which they can hardly have had time thoroughly to study; and although they are not called upon in terms to pledge themselves to adhere to this belief during all their days, yet, as remarked by Mr. Sedley Taylor in the pamphlet already cited, they are, from the circumstances in which they are placed, all but constrained to do so, being required to repeat their subscription at each step of preferment in the Church, not to mention that all their prospects in life depend upon their adherence to the system to which they are once committed. They have been induced to sign away their right of private judgment on some of the highest questions with which the human mind is capable of dealing. One may conceive the amount of pain and humiliation which the thought of this must often occasion to those who are capable of thinking, and of forming opinions for themselves—all the highest minds among them.

It is hardly possible that a body of clergy educated and

constituted as that of the Church of England can have any real weight or authority in guiding opinion. They are in a false position, being committed to a system at variance with the growing intelligence of the age, and almost necessarily involving a certain amount of conventional insincerity on their part. It is their business to enforce a set of opinions which are in their nature unchangeable. They are in some sort sworn to keep their minds stationary in one great department of knowledge and thought. They have every inducement to keep back the rest of the world. The progress of the others in knowledge will give them a keener sense of the humiliating position in which they are placed.

Disguise the matter as we will, it cannot be concealed that the Church is no longer in harmony with the age. Its teachings are in principle altogether at variance with the teachings of science—that later revelation, as it has been called, to which the world is indebted for the astonishing progress which in the last few centuries, and more especially in the last half century, has been made in the improvement of the condition of mankind, moral as well as material. Had the world acted on the principles still avowed by the rulers of the Church, the main division of it especially, material improvement—all that distinguishes civilisation from barbarism—must have made comparatively little progress, and morals must have remained at the low level at which they stood when the Church succeeded in usurping authority over the minds of men. For how much the Church is in this respect responsible it is impossible to say. It is a striking exemplification of its power in dwarfing and stunting the growth of the human intellect, that it should have been able, as the crowning effort of eighteen centuries, to erect into an article of faith a falsehood so palpable as the infallibility of the Pope.

A similar remark may be made as to the countenance given to spirit-rapping. Faraday used to say that the system of education that could leave the mental condition of the general public in the state in which this subject found it, must have been deficient in some very important principle.

That many of the clergy have their misgivings as to the truth of the system, which they do their best to stifle, there can be little doubt, and I am far from saying that in so doing they have not acted conscientiously. One of the most amiable and conscientious of men, the late Professor Keble, it is said, deliberately advised his young friend Arnold to put down his doubts about the Trinity by main force, and to take a cure to get rid of them.

Dr. Arnold himself, howsoever he may have succeeded in putting down his doubts, did not pretend that the question of the truth of the religion professed by him was not beset with difficulty. 'I wish,' he said in one of his published letters, 'to make the main point not the truth of Christianity *per se* as a theorem to be proved, but the wisdom of abiding by it, and whether there is any thing else for it but the life of beast or of devil.' I think it may be shown that there is something else, and that we may venture to inquire into its truth without any fear of its becoming necessary for us to lead the life either of beast or devil.\*

There are, no doubt, many clergymen remaining in the Church who feel as strongly as Mr. Clark and Mr. Sedley Taylor the objectionable character of its formularies, but who do not therefore think it incumbent upon them to quit its

\* Coleridge does not admit even this alternative. 'If a man,' he says, 'is not rising upwards to be an angel, depend upon it he is sinking downwards to be a devil. He cannot stop at the beast.'

service. They probably view the matter something in this way : The Church is there with its vast organisation for good if properly directed ; wisely or unwisely, they have become its ministers, and they are there to make the best of it. They may reasonably think that their chances of bringing about useful reforms are greater if they continue in the service of the Church than if they quit it. They may conscientiously believe that they serve the cause of religion and humanity better by retaining their position in the Church, shutting their eyes to its imperfections, and dwelling only on what is good in it. This good they wish to preserve along with the old and venerable associations which make the Church so powerful. They see very vividly the evils of any sudden and violent disruption of the Church system, and they are willing to make some sacrifice of consistency rather than incur the risk of encountering those evils. Many of them probably feel strongly that the old dogmatic system of the Church is no longer suited to the religious wants of the age, and desire nothing more than to let it fall quietly into disuse, if only their over zealous and less discreet brethren in the Church would allow it to do so. They share possibly the ‘ confident belief ’ of that great man the late Dean Milman (avowed in his *History of Latin Christianity*), ‘ that the words of Christ, and his words alone—the primal and indefeasible truths of Christianity—shall not pass away.’ And what they have at heart is to hasten the blessed consummation when the simple creed of its great founder, the love of God and the love of man, shall generally prevail. For my part I have only to wish these liberal and excellent men God speed.

It is not only with regard to questions of dogmatic belief and religious ceremonial that the Church is losing its hold: the fact is, that the course of men’s lives has ceased to be

regulated by ecclesiastical habits of thought, and the lay mode of looking at life is daily gaining ground more and more. 'The life which,' as Mr. Martineau says in one of his *Miscellanies*, 'seems noble and great to the mechanic, the merchant and the statesman, is unholy in sacerdotal eyes; the heroes of modern fiction and biography are unconsecrate, according to the measure of theology; and against that which the newspaper praises, the sermon lifts its voice.'

The great religious movement some quarter of a century ago among some of the leading Churchmen at Oxford University, among whom the names of Dr. Pusey and the elder Newman were conspicuous, which found its expression in the once celebrated *Tracts for the Times*,\* shows how sensibly alive those remarkable men were to the fact that the Church was losing its hold on the minds of men. They, however, thought that the remedy for the evil which they deplored was not to be sought in an endeavour to bring the Church into harmony with the age; to reconcile what was still vital in the old beliefs with the new truths which science and the progress of the world had revealed. On the contrary, they traced the mischief to the Church's departure, under the guidance of the Protestant Reformers, from the principles on which it was founded, and to which it owed its astonishing success in the early ages of its history. 'We were making too much of this world,' said these earnest men, 'and losing our hold on the next; forgetting that the next was the only real world, and this but a thorny road to it, to be trod with bleeding feet and broken spirits.' Mr. Froude,

\* The leading argument of the *Tracts for the Times* as addressed to Protestants seems to be that if they give up tradition and the authority of the Church, they have no foundation for many of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity or for church ceremonies deemed by Protestants of vital importance.



in a few pages of that remarkable theological romance of his, *The Nemesis of Faith*, sketches in a vivid manner the views of these zealous anti-reformers and the line of argument taken by them to the following effect:—

‘ We grant, say these adherents of the ancient faith, that the nations which remained Catholic have become comparatively powerless, while the Protestant nations have risen; and that the Catholic Church since the Reformation has produced no great man of science, no statesman, no philosopher, no poet:

‘ We grant that the personal character of the people in Roman Catholic countries is poor and mean, and it cannot be denied that this is to be traced to the moral dependence in which they are trained—to the conscience being taken out of their own hands, and deposited with the priest—to the disrespect with which this life is treated by the Catholic theory:

‘ We grant that historical criticism and scientific discovery have uniformly tended to invalidate the authority of histories to which the infallible Church has committed herself. But this argument tells not against Catholicism only, but against Christianity considered as historical and exclusive. From the beginning of time a peculiar body of people, not specially distinguished for individual excellences, had nevertheless been the objects of peculiar care, the channels of peculiar grace. Their language was inspired, and their priests divinely guided. The power and greatness which you say had attended the progress of Protestantism is the power and greatness of this world, and the Bible everywhere denounced the world as the enemy of God. We forswore the world in baptism. You are not to look among Christians for power and greatness. Your arguments tell against Christianity as much as against Catholicism. Catho-

licism is altogether a preternatural system, treating the world as a place of trial and temptation, and the devil as a main director of what seemed greatest and most powerful in it. The temper of a saint is quite different from the temper of a world's great man. Broken-hearted penitence is not likely to produce the effects which seem to worldly people so admirable. The hold of Christianity was not on the reason, but on the heart. Reason is not the whole of man, and alone must ever lead to infidelity. Protestant Christianity on the Continent had uniformly developed into Socinianism and thence into Pantheism. Confessedly Christianity was mysterious—the mysterious solution of a mysterious world, not likely to be reasonable. Unbelief was a sin, not a mistake, and deserved not argument, but punishment. The Reformers in allowing reason to sit in judgment on matters of faith were introducing an element which the subject (which was divine and not human) did not recognise.

‘The English were Protestants in the fullest sense of the word; but in spite of this unhealthy symptom the English Church had retained, apparently providentially, something of a Catholic character. It had retained the succession; it had retained the sacraments; it had retained liturgical forms which committed it to the just Catholic understanding of them. The question with the Tract writers was whether with the help of this old framework they could unprotestantise its working character—reinspire it with so much of the old life as should enable it to do the same work in England which the Roman Catholic Church produced abroad; to make England cease to produce great men (as we count greatness); and for piety, courage, daring, enterprise, resolution, and broad honest understanding, substitute devotion, endurance, humility, self-denial, sanctity, and faith.’ (pp. 145 to 152.)

Other and more recent attempts have been made in the same

direction, but with no happier result, in the shape of revivals, missions, and the like.\*

What hope can there be of the improvement of mankind if we are to look for guidance to a body of men who in the latter half of the nineteenth century can suggest nothing better to rouse the world and put it in the right way than a fortnight's prayer-meeting? Can we wonder that the more intelligent of the working classes look on with contemptuous indifference? Certainly this is not the way to deal with the crying evil of the day—the immense mass of destitution and ignorance, and consequent vice, among the lower classes.

Ignorance, as I have said, and the almost utter absence of moral and religious training among the masses of mankind,

\* The objects of some of such missions may be collected from the following preface or appeal prefixed to what is called *The Book of the Mission*, edited by the Society of St. John the Evangelist at Cowley, Oxford.

### WHAT IS A MISSION?

#### 1. *A Mission is a special call from God.*

It is a call to the *sinner*, 'Awake, thou that sleepest!' 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

It is a call to the *righteous*, 'Prepare to meet thy God;' 'Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord.'

Jonah preached a Mission to Nineveh, and the whole city repented and was saved.

Lot preached one night to Sodom, but they would not hearken, and were destroyed by fire.

#### 2. *A Mission is a time of special grace.*

Thousands are praying for your soul. Jesus opens His arms to you. Angels watch anxiously to see what you will do—whether you will cast yourself before Him or turn away. The churches are open. Hundreds of sinners are weeping for their sins. *Why do not you?*

Hundreds are crying to Jesus for help. *Why do not you?*

Hundreds are resolving to give up sin. *Why do not you?*

Hundreds are cleansed in Jesus' Blood to-day. *Why not you?*

Hundreds are happier than they ever were before. *Why not you?*

Hundreds are set free to-day. *Why not you?*

Hundreds are joining the pilgrims—bound to Heaven. *Why not you?*

are at the root of the evil which we all deplore—ignorance of their own nature and concerns—ignorance of the world in which they live, of their duties there, and of everything therein on which their chances of well-being and happiness depend. The elements of comfort and happiness are within the reach of all, or nearly all, if only the proper means were taken to secure them; but those means require to be discovered and made known, and they are only to be made available through diligent and persistent efforts for perhaps many ages; and this must be the work of education—an education founded on an intelligent comprehension of man's nature and of the system of the world.

To make a beginning with this work is the great difficulty. The masses of the population for whom there is no employment and who are in a state of utter destitution present the first obstacle. How to deal with this mass of destitution and wretchedness is the question. In the midst of privation and suffering it is in vain to hope to inculcate instruction of any kind. The physical condition of the people must be improved before we can hope to make any impression upon them. Emigration might do something towards this by enabling us to get rid of the excessive numbers; but unless a recurrence of the evil can be prevented, we cannot look for any permanent relief from this source. A time must come, moreover, when upon the present system the outlets themselves will be full, and the only real cure for a redundant population must be sought in self-restraint and a higher morality. With the aid of emigration as a temporary source of relief enabling a commencement of the good work to be made, and by working downwards from the better class of workmen, a higher standard of what are deemed the necessities of life may by degrees be established among all. It is a primary object that the tastes of

the lower classes of working men should be elevated and their ambition stimulated, and that they should learn to prize independence and respectability of character, and to aim at a higher quality of domestic comforts. With better habits only can we look for the moral and mental cultivation necessary to render improvement permanent.

No hope can, however, be entertained of real and permanent improvement in the condition of the masses of the people until the world shall have courage to look steadily at that inexorable law of nature which is at the root of the difficulty in which the world finds itself, viz., the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence. Nature is profuse of animal life, as well human life as that of the lower animals. In each the tendency is to increase beyond the means of living. In the case of the lower animals the equilibrium is in some degree restored by corresponding destruction. With man the same law of nature prevails, and unless by the exercise of his reason and through the influence of enlightened moral training he check the undue multiplication, the natural law inevitably takes its course, as we painfully witness in our great cities and other large centres of population, where poverty and privation do the work of destruction.

On this question, the one on which, perhaps, more than any other the happiness of the great mass of mankind ultimately depends, our working men have hitherto been left almost without instruction or guidance. In the middle ranks and among the wealthier classes, intelligence, forethought, and a rational regard to the future, interpose to some extent the elements of prevention in lieu of the terrible agencies of destruction; but with the masses the natural increase of the race in this country is almost entirely left to be counteracted by the destructive force of poverty, with its attendant sickness and

premature death. On this head the influence of the Church has, with very little exception, been exerted for evil. As Mr. John Mill has remarked, sentimentality rather than common sense is the genius that presides over the discussion of this question, and the working classes naturally listen willingly to sentimental teachers who mislead them.

It is the same throughout Christendom. The late Sir George Cornwall Lewis, in one of his published letters written from Malta, having called attention to over population as the main evil of the lower classes in that dependency, proceeds as follows:— ‘On the latter subject nearly the same opinions and the same morality seem to prevail as in Ireland. The priests recommend early marriages on the score of what they are pleased to call virtue; the consequence of virtue being to cover this little rock with people so thickly that already Carubas have become an article of food, and, if the increase goes on much further, the people must starve if they are not fed by English charity.’

It is of vital moment that sound views on this all-important question should be thoroughly impressed on all classes, and that the working men especially should be made distinctly to understand that it depends wholly on themselves whether their position in the world is to be improved or not—whether their condition is to be one of comfort, respectability, and happiness, or whether they are to go on struggling with destitution, over-worked and wretched.

Nor can this task be delayed. The working classes can no longer be safely left in their present condition. Enlarged political privileges have been conceded to them by the Legislature—so large indeed as to make them a preponderating power in the State; and whether they are to wield this power for good or for evil—whether the share which they are now to take in the government of the country is to be a blessing or a

source of danger, is a question of vital moment to the nation. In all our larger towns, moreover, large masses of the poorest class who ought to be able to live by their labour are altogether without regular employment or means of subsistence, and ready at any moment to become masses of crime; and though this precautionary consideration is perhaps not the highest motive for educating the people, it is one which it is well to bring to the notice of those who are not accessible to higher considerations.

Nothing is more striking in the history of the last hundred years than the change which has come over the working classes in the view which they take of their condition. At the beginning of that period hard and unremitting toil with coarse and somewhat scanty food was with a blind endurance accepted by them as their inevitable lot. But this is no longer the case. The belief has grown up, and become very general among them, that they have a *right* to wages sufficient to provide them with what they deem the requirements of comfortable subsistence. This belief has taken the shape, in this country especially, of Trades' Unions, and on a larger and more ambitious scale it displays itself in the form of 'Lausanne Congresses,' 'International Leagues of Peace and Liberty,' 'International Associations of Working Men,' 'Labour Representation Leagues,' schemes for 'Direct Legislation by the People,' and the like, with their presidents and secretaries, and annual meetings at Berne and other places on the Continent where such gatherings may be tolerated by the police.\*

\* In a paper in the *Fortnightly Review* for Nov. 1870, Professor Beesley (who by the way presided at the meeting in St. Martin's Hall in 1864, when the *International Working Men's Association* was founded) thus states the views of the leading members of the Association:—

'Wage-paid labour is destined to pass away, as serf-labour and slave-labour have passed away; and will give place to associated labour, which ought to be

Not the less formidable is this movement because of the ignorance which the leaders display of the province and powers of governments, and of the economical and other laws and circumstances on which the well-being of the working classes necessarily depends. Their whole system, indeed, proceeds on the principle of ignoring the well-established principles of political economy. According to the doctrine propounded at these gatherings, the Government alone is to blame that the condition of the working classes is not better than it is. If legislation were what it ought to be, work would, they insist, always be plentiful, wages high, hours light, and provisions cheap. These no doubt are delusions fatal to those who indulge them, but not to them alone; and it behoves those upon whom the duty of instructing the ignorant devolves to take some more effectual way of dispelling these delusions than invitations to prayer meetings and revivals.

In this difficulty I fear that, notwithstanding the immense resources at her command, little help is to be looked for from the Established Church. What we want is a thorough reformed system of education among the poorer classes especially (but not among them only), such as may afford a prospect, distant though it may be, of diminishing among the coming generations the sad amount of suffering and destitution now prevailing, and as may realise in some measure the many blessings which nature is ever ready to bestow on those who are intelligent and virtuous enough to make them their own.

developed to national dimensions and fostered by national means. No man has a right to call any thing his own which he has not produced by his own labour. Private property in the means of production should come to an end; national debts should be wiped out; the land, mines, machines, and railroads should revert to the community; whether the land so resumed should be cultivated by the "commune" or leased by the State to Co-operative Associations is a moot point; where the working class possesses political power, it is to produce these changes in a direct way.' (p. 530.)



This is a task which the Church as at present organised is not fitted to undertake. Besides almost entirely neglecting until quite a recent period the education of the poor, the Church, from the peculiar views to which it is irrevocably committed, has long been a clog on the higher education of the country. This has been felt and lamented by our greatest writers. But so powerful has been its organisation, and so extensively ramified throughout the length and breadth of the land, that all the efforts of the lay intelligence of the country to emancipate education from its control have until quite lately been ineffectual. ‘Men will some day open their eyes,’ said Mr. John Mill now nearly twenty years ago, in reviewing Dr. Whewell’s *Moral Philosophy*, ‘and perceive how fatal a thing it is that the instruction of those who are intended to be the guides and governors of mankind should be confided to a collection of persons pledged to a set of opinions made and prescribed it matters little whether three or thirteen centuries ago. . . . How can intellectual vigour be fostered by the teaching of those who, even as a matter of duty, would rather that their pupils were weak and orthodox than strong with freedom of thought?’—‘where,’ as Professor Seeley in the same spirit remarks,\* ‘the boy grows up among teachers whose lessons have been prescribed to them by authority, and the youth studies in an intimidated and bribed university, and men can get no instruction except from preachers whose mouths have been bridled by subscription.’

As regards the labouring classes, it is singular that in the Establishment of the Church of England there is no provision for the general education of the children of the poor. For education in the doctrines of the Established Church pro-

\* In a paper on Milton and Carlyle, in *Macmillan’s Magazine*.

vision is made, of what kind I shall presently examine ; but the clergy, as a class, were from the first opposed to the general education of the poor (as those are well aware who are old enough to remember the early years of the present century), until it was forced upon them ; and since then, their great struggle has been to secure to themselves the guidance of that education, so that it may be as little hurtful as possible to that which is the beginning and the end of the clergyman's aim in this matter, viz., to promote an unwavering belief in the great scheme of Christian doctrine, of which he is the appointed teacher. Except upon this condition the clergy have consistently opposed what is called the education of the people. Hence 'the religious difficulty,' of which we have heard so much.\* Nor do I presume to blame the individual clergyman for so doing. If he be sincere in the profession of his faith, he can hardly do otherwise. Being impressed with the paramount importance of inculcating a belief in the Christian scheme (the sole condition of salvation), and feeling as he must do the improbability that it will be believed at all unless mixed up with the earliest training, and imbibed, as it were, with the mother's milk, he will, if sincere, be prepared to sacrifice all other considerations to accomplishing this one great object. Moreover, I am quite ready to admit that the clergy of the present day are, within the limits allowed by their position, very exemplary in their devotion to the task of instructing the poor children, and are ready

\* It was very striking to observe, in the agitation which preceded the election of the first School Board under the recent Education Act, how Church of England and Sectarian organisations were formed on every side, seeking to promote their own theological views, whilst there was an almost entire absence of any common action having mainly in view the great interests of education. What enlarged scope is to be given to the education of the people under this Act remains to be seen ; it must be admitted that in their preliminary arrangements the London School Board have displayed a creditable degree of vigour.

to make large sacrifices of money as well as time for that object. But the education which they so advocate and support is of the narrowest and most superficial character. To cultivate to some small extent the natural faculties, to furnish them with a very imperfect key for acquiring knowledge, if earnestly so inclined, by teaching them the elements of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and to instil a belief in the doctrines of the Church, is about the whole amount of education which they care to give to the children in our national schools. When the work of what, by the Church, is called education has been completed, how little has been taught which has any special bearing on what fits the pupil for the life he has to live!

There was a time when the work of education generally was, from the necessity of the case, entrusted to the clergy; i.e., when science could hardly be said to exist, and they alone had the literary qualifications necessary for teaching the elements of knowledge. That time has passed away, and the laity now in real knowledge are in advance of the clergy.

I do not presume to attempt more than to suggest in the most general way what, as it appears to me, should be the scope of a comprehensive scheme of education. Its general aim should of course be to cultivate the faculties of the learners, and to furnish them with such knowledge and to train them in such habits and principles as will fit them for the world in which they are to live, and especially for the discharge of the duties belonging to their several stations here. But above all the education should be founded on a true view as well of the system on which the Divine government of this world is conducted, where all has been made to depend, for weal or for woe, on self-exertion socially and individually, as of the responsibilities social and individual thence arising. And constantly, and in all stages of education,

it should be impressed on the learner, whether in the school or from the pulpit, how much the well-being of himself and of all depending upon him, and remotely that of the society to which he belongs, depends on himself; and how deep a responsibility he therefore incurs for the due exercise of the faculties that have been given him.

With regard to the question of religion, I should say generally that the aim of what may be called the higher education should be to set before the young a high and worthy ideal of life, and to cultivate in them the powers adapted to attain that ideal. Among these powers the motives supplied by religion hold a prominent place; but it is as a power of life, not as a system of doctrine, that the true influence of religion is to be looked for.

As regards education generally, the late Prince Consort, in one of the numerous addresses for which this country is for ever indebted to that great man, thus succinctly states its aim:

It should be to teach—

1. The physical laws on which health depends.
2. The moral laws on which happiness depends.
3. The intellectual laws on which knowledge depends.
4. The social and political laws on which national prosperity depends.
5. The economic laws on which wealth depends.\*

A scheme of education grounded on this model would of course be too comprehensive for our primary schools; but even

\* According to Chamfort, 'l'éducation doit porter sur deux bases, la morale et la prudence: la morale pour appuyer la vertu; la prudence pour vous défendre contre les vices d'autrui. En faisant pencher la balance du côté de la morale vous ne faites que des dupes ou des martyrs; en la faisant porter de l'autre côté vous faites des calculateurs égoïstes. Le principe de toute société est de se rendre justice à soi-même et aux autres. Si l'on doit aimer son prochain comme soi-même, il est au moins aussi juste de s'aimer comme son prochain.'—*Œuvres*, i, 406.

in these, no system of education, as regards the working classes especially, will effectually answer the purpose which does not include, along with the ordinary elements of education, thorough and sound instruction in the circumstances immediately affecting their special condition in life. They should be instructed, for example, in the laws which determine the rate of wages, from ignorance of which spring most of their contentions with their masters. Familiarity with the principle of property, and a knowledge of the natural laws by operation of which the annual produce of the labour of the community is distributed, seem to be the means best adapted to reconcile them to the inequality of distribution which they see take place, and which there are people ignorant or unprincipled enough to tell them is in violation of their rights, because it is, as they falsely allege, by their labour that everything is produced. On the other hand, it would be well that it should be impressed on the upper classes that the rights of property are not all in all, and that they exist only because they are expedient for all.

There should be added, especially in the girls' school, instruction in the real business of the life they will have to lead, viz., the common domestic duties—the properties of food, the elements of cooking, and the various arts of humble life, on the knowledge of which the happiness of the class to which they belong so much depends.

There are many indications that improvement in education generally, and especially in that of the higher classes, is at hand. The wider and more practical scope now being given to public school and university education, and especially the greater attention paid to *science* as a means of education, are important steps in the way of improvement. 'I believe,' says Professor Huxley in one of his lay sermons, 'that the greatest intellectual revolution mankind has yet seen is now slowly

taking place by her agency. She is teaching the world that the ultimate court of appeal is observation and experiment, and not authority; she is teaching it to estimate the value of evidence; she is creating a firm and living faith in the existence of immutable moral and physical laws, perfect obedience to which is the highest possible aim of an intelligent being.' (p. 130.)

Scientific teaching has the advantage, whilst dealing with actual tangible things, of applying to them the accurate methods of reasoning derived from the study of mathematics; and thus one great aim of education, that of teaching people to think accurately, is accomplished.

What sanguine hopes may we not entertain of the increase of power to which by improved methods the human faculties, and with them the well-being of mankind physical and moral, may attain! As Condorcet observes in his celebrated *Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des Progrès de l'Esprit humain*: 'À mesure que les faits se multiplient, l'homme apprend à les classer, à les réduire à des faits plus généraux, comme les instruments et les méthodes qui servent à les observer, à les mesurer avec exactitude, acquièrent en même temps une précision nouvelle; mais comme à mesure que l'on connaît entre un plus grand nombre d'objets des rapports plus multipliés, on parvient à les réduire à des rapports plus étendus, et les renfermer sous des expressions plus simples, à les présenter sous des formes qui permettent d'en saisir un plus grand nombre, même en ne possédant qu'une même force de tête et n'employant qu'une égale intensité d'attention, comme à mesure que l'esprit s'élève à des combinaisons plus compliquées, des formules plus simples les lui rendent bientôt faciles: les vérités dont la découverte a coûté le plus d'efforts qui d'abord n'ont pu être entendus que par des hommes capables de méditations

profondes, sont bientôt après développées et prouvées par des méthodes qui ne sont plus au-dessus d'une intelligence commune. Si les méthodes qui conduisaient à des combinaisons nouvelles sont épuisées, si leur application aux questions non encore résolues exigent des travaux qui excèdent ou le temps ou les forces des savans, bientôt des méthodes plus générales, des moyens plus simples, viennent ouvrir un nouveau champ au génie. La vigueur, l'étendue réelle des têtes humaines sera restée la même ; mais les instrumens qu'elles peuvent employer se seront multipliés et perfectionnés ; mais la langue qui fixe et détermine les idées aura pu acquérir plus de précision, plus de généralité ; mais au lieu que, dans la mécanique, on ne peut augmenter la force qu'en diminuant la vitesse, ces méthodes qui dirigeront le génie dans la découverte des vérités nouvelles ont également ajouté et à la force et à la rapidité de ses opérations.' (p. 352, 2nd. edit.)

Another source of encouragement is the disposition very generally shown to enlarge the scope of female education. 'Few have yet realised,' as observed in an article in *Nature*, for June 16, 1870, 'the enormous gain that will accrue to society from the scientific education of our women. If, as we are constantly being told, the "sphere of woman" is at home, what duty can be more clearly incumbent upon us than that of giving her the opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the laws which ought to guide her in the rule of her house? Every woman on whom the management of a household devolves may profit by such knowledge. If the laws of health were better known, how much illness and sorrow might be averted! What insight would a knowledge of chemistry afford into the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of different articles of food! What added zest would be given to a country walk with the children, or a month by the seaside, if the mother were able to

teach the little ones intelligently to observe and revere the laws of Nature! Above all, what untold sufferings, what wasted lives, are the penalty we have paid for the prudish ignorance of the physiology of their bodily frame in which we have kept our daughters! These considerations have had far too little place with us at present. We trust that a new era is dawning upon us.'

The subject of health has been too much neglected in our educational institutions. The importance of obtaining as much knowledge as possible of the means of preserving health can hardly be exaggerated. How different might have been the lot of multitudes if the causes of disease and early death resulting from ignorance of the laws of health had been made familiarly known! If these subjects were properly introduced into our systems of instruction, the welfare of the community would be greatly increased. Sir John Lubbock, in his *Pre-historic Times*, calls attention to this subject. 'With increased knowledge of and attention to the laws of health,' he says, 'disease will become less and less frequent. Those tendencies thereto which we have derived from our ancestors will gradually die out, and if fresh seeds are not sown, our race may one day realise the advantages of health.'

The only kind of education which the Church of England has felt itself strictly under obligation to furnish is the religious instruction for the young contained in its Catechism. What is the instruction which it so provides for the young? One should have thought that as soon as it was desirable to teach a child anything of religion, the reasonable course would be to endeavour to give it some notion of such simple duties as it is capable of understanding—to teach it to be kind to its brothers and sisters and playfellows, to tell the truth on all



occasions, to do what it is told to do by its parents and teachers; and, when old enough, to teach it, in the words of the one sentence of the Catechism which I am able heartily to commend, 'to do its duty in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call it;' telling it that if it do these things it will please the great and good Being who made and governs the world, and who is called God. At the same time it might learn by heart the Lord's Prayer and one or two such simple texts as 'Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you;' in short some such teaching as we may imagine the Author of the Christian religion impressing upon the little children whom He liked to be brought to Him. It would seem better to say nothing of reward for so behaving, but rather to aim at cultivating the higher feeling which is natural to us and requires only to be cultivated—the desire to please and to win the approval of the great and the good.

The Church of England's method of instilling religion into the youthful mind is to begin by teaching the child the Church Catechism, a complicated system of theology, quite beyond the comprehension of a child even the most precocious, in repeating which the child is taught to assert as facts a great number of things which it does not and cannot know to be true—to say that it believes propositions which it cannot possibly understand—to draw inferences from the lesson which often the lesson does not warrant.

Surely this is not the way to develope and cultivate the child's nascent faculties—to instil into the infant mind the elements of religion, and lead it to the contemplation of the Author of all good. If it is nothing worse, it is an idle waste of time to attempt to burden the child's memory with unintelligible dogmas under the name of religion. It cannot be supposed that the child will be influenced to any good purpose

by this kind of formulated Christianity. It would almost seem as if the object were to cramp and bind the young intellect by beginning early enough to prepare it for the reception of a system at variance with all that we see around us. Certainly the lessons taught in the Catechism are anything but calculated to inspire the child with the love of truth, earnestness, or sincerity : it is, in fact throughout a trifling with truth and sincerity.

That this is its character a very few specimens of its teachings will suffice to show.\*

First, the child is made to say that in its baptism (an operation of which it can know nothing) it was made a Member of Christ and a Child of God. What can it possibly understand about being a Member of Christ or a Child of God? Why should it be made to assert as a fact what it cannot possibly understand? It is true that it must sometimes happen to a child to have to repeat things which it does not understand ; but why go out of our way to make it do this? and that too in an exercise which is professedly intended to convey instruction to the child.

Then the child is made to say that its godfathers and godmother vowed that it should renounce the devil and all his works. What is the meaning of *renouncing* the works of the devil? Is it well to say anything at all to the child about a devil? Suppose the precocious child should ask, as it naturally may, why God allows such a mischievous creature to exist, can any satisfactory answer possibly be given? The child is made also to assert that they vowed that it should renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. The child cannot possibly know anything about the subject of this

\* Much of this criticism is taken from Bentham's *Church of Englandism Examined*.

vow. Why is it made to assert what it cannot know as a fact and to which it cannot attach any meaning? If it is desirable at this early age to teach the child anything about the pomps of the world, why is it not rather taught to take pomp at its true value, as the Bishops do? The Bishops do not renounce pomp, as the child will see when the time for confirmation arrives, if not before, when it comes to know the meaning of the word.

Besides the vow to renounce the devil and all his works and the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, the godparents further vowed, as the child is made to assert, that it should believe all the Articles of the Christian faith: and the child is then asked—‘Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe . . as they have promised for thee?’ and it is made to answer ‘Yes, verily,’ &c. &c.

It is bad enough to instruct the child that it is bound to believe what some other persons have promised that it shall believe. Why add to this a lesson of insincerity in making the child say that it thinks it is so bound when it is quite unable to form an opinion on the subject?

Can it be right thus to trifle with so solemn a thing as belief, and of course also with truth? Belief ought to follow, and real belief does follow only upon our being satisfied of the truth of that which we are called on to believe. Belief is not a voluntary act. We cannot, by resolving to do so, believe whatever we please. Belief is dependent on the evidence presented to the mind. We may, it is true, resolve to hear one side of a question only, and shut our ears to whatever is to be said on the other side. But that is a course of conduct that, out of the Church, will hardly be commended in these days. The only *merit* that can attach to belief must proceed from the faithfulness and diligence with which the inquiry from which the

belief results has been conducted. But this merit is out of the question if the inquirer sets out with a foregone conclusion at which he is bound to arrive. All observation shows, and it is a truth in science now generally admitted, that the condition on which every thing valuable is given to man on this earth is that he inquire and find out what is true, and that he accept nothing as true without examination and being satisfied that it is so. This is the great lesson of Nature, the key to all true knowledge and progress in the world; and yet the first thing a child is taught by the Church is, that three persons have taken upon themselves to make a vow by which it is bound not to inquire, but to believe—not to seek out the truth and hold fast to it when found, but to believe blindly a number of propositions that it is quite incapable of understanding.

Surely it is time that an end were put to the practice of godfathers and godmothers entering into solemn engagements with God for a purpose so immoral. Truth and sincerity being two of the primary virtues, at all times to be enforced, can it be right to make the first solemn lesson that a child is taught, a lesson of insincerity and paltering with the truth?

In a question further on the child is asked what it chiefly learns by the Ten Commandments, and it is made to answer that it learns two things—its duty to God and its duty to its neighbour; and it proceeds to define the duty to its neighbour which it so learns. Now what is there set forth as the child's duty to its neighbour and alleged to be learned from the Ten Commandments may be admitted to be a fair summary of the moral law and duty to one's neighbour; but it is not correct to say that the child learns this from the Ten Commandments: in the Commandments there is not a word about submitting ourselves to our superiors, pastors and masters, nor as to ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to our 'betters'

(whatever the word may mean), nor as to keeping our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. . Yet it is made to assert that it learns this from the Ten Commandments.

So in the question immediately following the Lord's Prayer, it is asked 'What desirest thou of God in this prayer?' and it is made to answer 'I desire my Lord God . . . to send His grace unto me and unto all people.' Now throughout the Lord's Prayer there is not one word about grace. It cannot but have a most injurious effect on the mental faculties, intellectual and moral, to accustom the child to this kind of laxity of statement.

Such is a specimen of the Church of England's especial teaching. It was in order to be allowed to give religious instruction of this character that the clergy so long and so pertinaciously (conscientiously it may be) stood in the way of the general education of the people by insisting, as a condition of any education being given at all, that the Catechism should be taught in the school, and the Bible read and explained in conformity with it. The cause of education and of the general enlightenment of the people under such direction does not, I fear, present an encouraging aspect.

A more unsuitable book than the Bible to be used as a class book for giving elementary instruction could hardly be selected, whether the question be looked at intellectually or morally. In training, and as it were forming the mind of the child, we cannot begin too soon to teach it to see things as they are in nature. We cannot look into the Bible without feeling that we have got into an atmosphere, moral and intellectual, quite different from that which we breathe in the world and the world's literature. In the Bible God is represented as doing everything by His direct and immediate agency, and not by the operation

of general and invariable laws, which the enlarged experience and science of the present day show to be the case. Painful as may be the struggle to admit the truth, we are constrained, if honest, to acknowledge that the Bible interpretation of the course of nature can no longer be accepted as true; 'for,' as Bacon says in his *Advancement of Learning*, 'certain it is that God worketh nothing in nature but by second causes; and if they would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture as it were in favour towards God, and nothing else but to offer to the Author of Truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie.'

The child is all too imaginative: it delights in the marvellous, and the difficulty is to fix its attention on the why and how things really are on all occasions. The practice should be to encourage the child to ask for explanations and to use its reasoning faculties. But how is it possible to do this, if the book which is the basis of the instruction treats of the world, not as we now know it to be governed by universal invariable laws, but as a world where all is marvellous and exceptional—where no explanations can be given to the child that will not have the effect of confusing instead of clearing and strengthening its powers of observation and reasoning, which is the great aim of education intellectually considered; and if looked at morally, what can be more unfit than to place in the hands of children, with the view of conveying instruction and forming their character, a book, whole chapters of which turn on subjects that cannot even be mentioned without impropriety, and where stories are told—and these are sure to take the fancy of the child—of persons represented to be high in the favour of God displaying deceit, treachery, thieving, lust—in short vices of every kind that ought never to be brought to the notice of a child except with the view of exciting its horror and aversion? Surely the great principles of religion may be

taught to children apart from all controversial dogmas, and without resorting to the use, as a school book, of a book so ill suited for elementary instruction, and which is so open to objection on the points that have been adverted to.

I propose in my next letter to proceed to the consideration of the theory of the Divine Government of the World according to what I call the Natural System.

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR —,

I now proceed to consider the order of the world according to the natural system, as determined by the methods of science, viz., a careful examination of God's works.

The first great truth that we discover is that it has pleased God that the world shall be governed by general and invariable laws.\* That this is the order of Providence, however much at variance with what, with our limited views, we should antecedently have deemed probable, a careful observation of the course of nature and of the facts of the world leaves no room

\* There is nothing in this view of the universality of law which necessarily excludes the notion of a Personal God. Sir Richard Hanson, the Chief Justice of South Australia, observes in his admirable paper on Science and Theology, read before the Adelaide Philosophical Society,<sup>1</sup> p. 6: 'So far as science is concerned, there is nothing in the conception of causation which necessarily contradicts personality; nothing in the universality of law which excludes will. On the contrary, knowing that with men, the higher their moral and intellectual faculties, the more nearly do they approach to consistency, and the more rarely do they manifest anomalies and imperfections; we are naturally, if not necessarily, led to regard this connection as essential, and to suppose that, in proportion to the wisdom, goodness, and power which any being possesses will be the uniformity of the procedure in which his will is manifested. And hence, assuming the absolute wisdom, power, and goodness of God, we should deduce from that assumption an absolute uniformity in the processes of nature and the dealings of Providence, supposing that these are the results of His Will.'

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<sup>1</sup> Scott, Ramsgate.



for reasonable doubt. The only foundation indeed for belief in the natural sciences is that the general laws, known and unknown, which regulate the phenomena of the universe, are constant and invariable. Without this invariable order in the processes of nature there could be no science. Why the world has been so constituted, or whether it could have been otherwise, it is vain to inquire. It may be that the inevitable evil which we see in the world is the necessary consequence of this, perhaps necessary, constitution of things, and that here is to be found a solution of the great mystery of the existence of evil in the world.

The dawning of this truth, that the world is governed by general laws, and not by a succession of providential interferences, as exemplified in the history of the Jewish theocracy, is one of the first shocks that the belief (drawn from that history) impressed upon us in our youth by our religious teachers has to sustain. According to the Hebrew prophets, all the great operations of nature were the result of the immediate interference of Jehovah. They looked upon the thunder as His voice, and the lightning as the breath of His nostrils; every striking occurrence of nature being referred to His direct agency. Nothing is more natural than that a highly imaginative race, entirely devoid of science, being possessed as they were, in common with some other Eastern races, with the notion of one God, the Creator and Governor of the world, should so conceive of the great operations of nature. Modern science teaches a different lesson. It looks upon the whole universe as governed by general and invariable laws, where everything is effected through the instrumentality of second causes; and all the investigations of science lead us to conclude that the order of nature which we find now prevailing has existed from the earliest ages.

A little reflection will convince us of the inestimable advantage that we derive from the fact that the laws of nature are invariable. The sequence being constant, we are able to look forward and calculate coming events. The past becomes the interpreter of the future: by careful observation and study we can discover the laws, and regulate our conduct in conformity with them. We may readily conceive the confusion and perplexity that would have prevailed in the world if there were no certain order in the course of nature. As it is, the laws being invariable, we have only to find them out and obey them.

The question, however, is not what is advantageous or the contrary, but what is true. Experience convinces us that the laws are fixed and inexorable. If we fail to discover or to understand them, or if we fail to regulate our conduct in conformity with them, we inevitably suffer the consequences of our neglect, whether the neglect arise from ignorance or from sloth, from wilful disobedience, or from whatever other cause; such is the stern, yet salutary, teaching of experience. If we take poison we die; if we fail to rule our appetites we suffer in health or other ways, and that whether we have been better taught or not. The ruined health of the father in many cases causes the child to suffer; this is the inexorable law. It is immaterial whether the condition of the father arose from intemperance or vice, or from over-exertion in the laudable desire to do the best for himself and his family. If we do not sow, we cannot reap. If we marry and bring a family into the world without the means of supporting them, our life will be a long struggle with privation of every kind—a reproach to ourselves and a burden to our relations and friends. And as of the individual, so it is of society and nations. If the nation fail to make or to enforce the laws required to restrain the violent or rapacious dispositions of its members, it must suffer the consequences of its

neglect. If it fail to impose constitutional restrictions on its rulers, it must bear the evil arising from their despotic disposition. This is the first great lesson that we have to learn.

This being the great lesson of nature, and most of the evil of this world being ultimately traceable to the neglect of this lesson, it should in all our teachings be earnestly enforced. Yet, as has already been pointed out, our Church's teaching is founded on an opposite system. The truth, however, is dawning on the Christian world, and greatly it perplexes the rulers of our Church. Our whole religious system being founded on the notion of a God specially interfering on all occasions, they, in their shortsightedness, deem it a matter of vital importance to the Church that this truth should be resisted, and they struggle to resist its admission accordingly.\*

With regard to the interesting and all-important question

\* Some of our more liberal clergy already recognise the necessity of reconciling religion with science, and are preparing to rest the Church upon foundations less liable to be disturbed. In two very remarkable sermons preached by the Rev. Stopford Brooke, in St. James's Chapel, York Street, and published in a volume, with others, in 1869—the one on 'The Lessons of the Cholera,' and the other on 'The Naturalness of God's Judgments'—the preacher is at some pains to reconcile revealed religion with science. All the so-called judgments of God, he maintains, are the natural results of the violation of laws, and as such are always unarbitrary. (p. 42.) In establishing this principle firmly, he says: 'we get rid of nearly all that sets scientific men in opposition to religious men.' (*ibid.*) He deprecates the notion 'that God is liable to incursions of anger, subject to our passions and weakness, as if He were the God of disorder, and not of order, of special providences, and not of law.' (p. 32.) To find out the laws, and to range ourselves upon their side, is, he maintains, the true prayer to God and the true way of meeting the judgments of God in our petitions. (p. 28.)

Mr. Brooke goes so far as to contend that the Hebrew prophets took this view of the Almighty and His dealings with mankind. Each judgment, he affirms, was connected with its proper cause, and was the result of the violation of a particular law, or set of laws. 'In its execution God pointed out the causes which had brought it on, and said: Change those causes, repent of those transgressions of my laws: find out my laws, and accord with them your actions, and my punishment will become to you not punishment, but blessing.' 'Now, all this, long ago manifested in the prophetic teaching, is the very thing which science teaches.' (p. 33.)

as to the nature and condition of the human race at its first appearance on the earth, involving, as it does, the great problem of the Fall, the investigations of science lead to a conclusion at variance with the notion that man on his first introduction into the world was a more perfect being than at present. On the contrary, they lead to the belief that the world has been in a course of gradual development and progress from the first moment of its formation, countless ages ago, and that for a long period before the appearance of man on the earth things had been gradually shaping themselves into fitness for the existence of higher and higher classes of being until at length Man appeared—at first, there is some reason to believe, in a low animal form; whether, as Darwin confidently thinks, descended from some less highly organised form, it is perhaps too early to determine. However this may be, man would seem, according to the most probable conjecture, to have originally come into the world very much as the more perfectly organised of the lower animals, and in many points resembling them, but distinguished by a higher intelligence and by a capacity for improvement such as is not found in them. He would at the first be altogether ignorant of the powers and resources of nature; being left to find out everything for himself. Being endowed with self-love and other passions to stimulate his activity, and with reason and other faculties, rude at first and dormant, but capable of being awakened and cultivated, to guide him in the pursuit of what he deemed conducive to his well-being, he would seem to have been left to grope in the dark through a long succession of generations, in a condition little better than that of the beasts of the field.

With everything to find out, the progress of improvement among the early inhabitants of the earth must have been very slow. Many generations would pass before they could do more

than obtain a precarious subsistence from fishing, from the chase, and from such fruits as the earth spontaneously produced. Next, perhaps, would come the domestication of a few kinds of animals, with some rude agriculture. In the meantime would grow up some notions of property, and a commencement of the social order, with its laws and morality. At first customs only would prevail; then, as society increased, laws would become necessary, establishing property by defining rights and providing for the redress of wrongs.

The growth of language must have been very slow. The discovery of letters, and consequently of written language, following probably upon a rude pictorial kind of language, would be one of the greatest steps in the world's improvement. Yet there is in it nothing of a supernatural character. So soon as it came to be discovered that words were but the combination of a limited number of articulations, the step would be simple to the representation of each by a distinctive sign. After the discovery of letters and a written language printing seems an obvious device; so much so that it would seem probable that it was the invention of the art of making paper that gave it currency and value rather than the invention of a separate type for each letter to be combined into a word.

From the first, almost nothing has been given to man without great labour.\* Labour, indeed—his own or that of his predecessors—is the condition of his existence. He has been left to achieve everything by his own exertions. The elements of all good were there; but, with very few exceptions, they had to be diligently sought out and appropriated, or they would remain for ever hidden.

The conjectural description given by Horace is perhaps as

\* Nil sine magno  
Vita labore dedit mortalibus.—Hor.

near the truth as we can hope to attain of the condition of the human race through many generations of its earliest history :

Cum prorepserunt primis animalia terris,  
Mutum et turpe pecus, glandem atque cubilia propter  
Unguibus et pugnīs, dein fustibus, atque ita porro  
Pugnabant armis, quæ post fabricaverat usus ;  
Donec verba, quibus voces sensusque notarent,  
Nominaque invenerē ; dehinc absistero bello,  
Oppida cœperunt munire, et ponere leges,  
Ne quis fur esset, neu latro, neu quis adulter.\*

Lib. I. Sat. iii. 99-106.

Wieland, in his note on this passage, adopting Horace's view, that it was the general good (*utilitas*) which led man to the distinction between right and wrong, proceeds to give his views of the development and establishment of society, and of law.† 'As men,' he says, 'wandered about in their first natural condition in the woods and uncultivated plains, they had as yet no conception of laws and duties. They sought merely to satisfy their natural propensities, and if a contest arose the strongest prevailed. The consequence was a universal state of war (*bellum omnium contra omnes*), which must have ended in the extermination of the whole race, were it not that there is a something in man the development of which is as natural to him as the growth of his body and the unfolding of his animal

\* When human beings from primeval clay  
Crawl'd forth at first and struggled into day,  
Dumb squalid brutes for dens, and acorn-mast,  
They fought with nails and fists, then clubs, at last  
With such rude arms as they by slow degrees  
Were driven to frame by their necessities,  
Till they invented language to express  
Their thoughts and feelings : then grew less and less  
The rage of war ; wall'd towns began to rise  
And laws were framed to appal and to chastise  
Thieves, robbers, and adulterers.—*Theodore Martin's Transl.*

See also a beautiful description of the formation of human societies in the fifteenth Satire of Juvenal, ll. 140 to 158.

† Horazen's *Satiren*. Leipsig, 1819.

strength. This something developes itself in man just as, through a like natural impulse (Trieb) speech has been invented, by means of which men have been enabled to hold fast their conceptions, and to raise their feelings into thoughts, and to communicate their thoughts one to another. From this point human life attains a higher form: the animal wildness disappears, and the feeling of the endless inconveniences they had endured in that state led them on to the idea of social order. Men saw that for their own good they must put a restraint on their inclinations—that they must bridle their passions; and in this way the fear of wrong—i.e., a longing to be freed, from the hurtful consequences of lawless freedom—becomes the mother of right or of the first positive law. This is the gift of reason to men. By this, violent actions, or injuries to others, seeing that they are wholly incompatible with the peace and general well-being of society, are declared to be wrong, and to be offences which are to be subjected to the general vengeance. This vengeance of society against wrongdoers could not, without falling into the old disorder, be left to the caprice of the injured persons. For nature alone does not teach men to distinguish in each case what is right or wrong, so surely as she teaches everyone through his feelings merely what is good or bad for him. On the contrary, the anger which inflames us on suffering an injury would, in the vengeance to be taken, be continually overstepping the bounds of what is reasonable. The law, therefore, must undertake the office of administering punishment in society; and as the adjusting of the punishment depends on the amount of injury which the society or the person immediately injured has suffered, and as no man of sound understanding will in this view maintain that it is the same thing whether a man takes a turnip out of another man's garden, or robs a church, whether he gives a man a blow on

the head, or strangles his own father, so it cannot reasonably be maintained that these offences deserve the same punishments. And, therefore, it is clear that criminal laws, founded on equity, are required, according to which crimes may be punished in proportion to the injury which they do to society.'

Whether or not this be an accurate or complete explanation of the origin of law and the foundation of civil society, it is at least consistent with what we observe going on in the present day to suppose that they grew up somehow in this way.

*The science of morals—of right and wrong conduct—that branch of the science of man's well-being which treats of the due cultivation and government of the affections, and the consequent regulation of his conduct under the influence of conscience and a sense of duty, apart from the restraint of law—seems, no less than the science of law, to have been left to man to discover and build up, by slow and painful observation and experience of the effects of different lines of conduct on the happiness of mankind. As Mr. Froude has expressed it, 'The moral laws are inherent in nature like the laws of the material universe, and our business is to discover what they are.'* These laws rest on the same foundation as the other laws of nature, and are to be found out in the same mode, and their violation is in like manner followed by their allotted punishment. In the moral as in the material world, identical antecedents are followed by unvarying consequents. If we feel less certainty with respect to the moral than the physical order of things, it is not from any doubt as to the uniformity of causation: our uncertainty arises from our ignorance whether on two similar occasions the same causes and no other are in operation.



As was the case with regard to the origin of laws, many generations must have passed away before even the simplest elements of morals were discovered; and the early races had to endure the consequences of their ignorance.

In pursuing inquiries of this nature our ancestors from a very early period must, it seems probable, have proceeded very much as we ourselves do at the present day. We find ourselves cast into the world under circumstances over which we have had no control, and for which we are in no way responsible. We are endowed with passions to stimulate us to exertion, and with reason to control those passions. Our passions are constantly tempting us to do that which is hurtful to ourselves and others, and we are saved from this mischief only by having found, by long and painful experience (i.e., if we are to go to the origin of morals), the necessity of controlling them with a view to our own good not less than that of others. In exercising this control, we are aided by a certain faculty or feeling to which the names moral sense, sense of duty, or conscience, have been given—an ethical sentiment vague and feeble, and almost evanescent, in the absence of cultivation, but among races that have arrived at some degree of civilisation capable of exercising more or less influence over the dispositions and actions of man according to the degree in which it has been cultivated. It is the object of ethics to inquire into the nature and working of this influence, and to construct a system of morals calculated to advance the happiness of mankind; and it is the business of education to reduce it into practice.

The passions—envy, ambition, and the like—which, when not kept under due control, issue in robbery, violence, and tyranny—are parts of our natural constitution, and are not without their advantages. Without them we should be less

active and progressive.\* What is required is that they should be kept under due control, moral or legal. Happily, we find implanted within us an antagonistic principle—the moral faculty before referred to—only requiring due cultivation in order to form a check to the action of the passions in so far as they are injurious to ourselves or others, and so to bring about the harmonious working of the human constitution. If this harmonious action be not accomplished, morally or legally, the subject of them himself suffers, or causes others to suffer, the natural consequences of the excess. Hence the strong motive for moral culture and for imposing legal restraint where necessary.

As we are endowed with self-love to urge us to pursue our own happiness, so likewise we are endowed with a capacity for sympathy and compassion which leads us to desire to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures; and the further our cultivation of the sentiments of sympathy and compassion advances the more we become convinced that our purest happiness lies in promoting the well-being of our fellow-creatures. To live exclusively for our own gratification, though our enjoyments be of a refined and intellectual kind, is to cultivate only the lower elements of our nature: there are few pleasures worthy of the name which are not largely increased in value when partaken by others.

The moral feelings with which we are endued, however they may have sprung up, seem common to all men of any degree of cultivation: that is to say, the ethical sentiment is common to all, though there may be the greatest diversity in the ideas or objects answering to these feelings. With respect to the

\* 'Les passions, disait l'ermite à *Zadig*, sont les vents qui enflent les voiles du vaisseau; elles le submergent quelquefois, mais sans elles il ne pourrait voguer.'

'Our vices are the soil on which our virtues grow.'—Goethe.

questions, What is the object of duty? What is right or wrong in various circumstances? What is vice or virtue? —as to these there is and has been considerable diversity of opinion, not only among different persons of the same age and country, but more especially in different ages and countries. Practices now universally condemned as wrong among all civilised nations were in a former age, among the most advanced people—the Greeks, for instance—universally approved, and were commended by the greatest geniuses which that or any age or country has produced, men of great intellectual vigour and lofty moral character—Socrates, Plato, Aristotle.

The wide diversity of opinion with respect to the objects of ethical sentiment—of moral approbation and disapprobation—and the want of any acknowledged guide in the difficult questions that present themselves, has given rise to the notion that a special or direct revelation of the will of God was required and was to be expected. It is urged, moreover, that the revelation to the intellect through the physical works of the universe cannot satisfy our moral constitution. That constitution craves, it is said, a moral manifestation of the Deity; and this longing after God's moral nature is, it is urged, an intimation that such a revelation may be looked for and will be vouchsafed.

But surely all analogy leads to an opposite conclusion. In the physical world there is no special revelation of the workings of God or of His laws in the government of the universe. There we are left to discover everything for ourselves. Secrets of nature of the highest moment to our happiness (the virtues of chloroform, for instance) remain hidden for thousands of years, until by a diligent exercise of the powers of observation which God has given us—perhaps by a happy accident—we discover them. That is the only revelation vouchsafed to us in the physical world.

Why should we suppose that it would be otherwise in the moral world? In the moral world, as the religious philosopher contends, God reveals Himself to the heart and the conscience of man, as He has revealed Himself to the intellect through the medium of what we call external nature. The living Book in which we are to read God's moral nature—God's mind in relation to His creature man—lies open to the inspection of our hearts as the book of external nature lies open to the inspection of our eyes and intellects. By a careful observation of the working of God in the heart and the conscience—so to speak—and a comparison of our own experiences with those of others, we arrive at some notion of the moral character of God—imperfect, it is true, as our knowledge of His works in the physical universe is imperfect. As our ideas of what is right and noble and true improve, so do our ideas of a perfect God. In our knowledge both of the moral and physical world there is room for apparently endless progressive improvement. In the meantime we must be content to accept such provision for our moral nature as God has thought fit to make; to use our best efforts to understand and improve it, and to regulate our lives accordingly.

It can hardly be contended that a special revelation was needed more in the spiritual than in the physical world: the ignorance was at least as great in the one as the other, and the immediate necessity for supernatural aid was really more urgent in the physical than in the spiritual world, because in the state of utter destitution of all comfortable means of living which prevailed in the earlier ages of the world mankind were not in a condition to profit by a spiritual revelation. And if, as has been supposed by Lessing (in his '*Erziehung des menschen Geschlechts*'), and by other writers, there have been progressive divine revelations adapted to successive stages in the progressive

improvement of the human understanding, it would seem probable (if we are to resort to antecedent probability) that the first revelation would be of the knowledge necessary to raise mankind out of the first stage of gross ignorance and consequent destitution of everything necessary for the supply of their animal wants which prevailed in the early ages, so as to raise them into a position to avail themselves of the higher revelation in its due season.

There is one thing with regard to which it may be admitted that, if in any case vouchsafed, a revelation might not unreasonably have been expected, viz., the question of a future state of existence and man's destiny in relation thereto—a matter as to which it appears beyond our natural powers to form any certain opinion. But on this the revelation to the Jews contained in the Bible is wholly silent. Among other nations, the Greeks especially, a firm conviction of this doctrine had been arrived at by natural means. We may reasonably ask, Why did Moses and the prophets give no hint of it? And here Lessing's theory of the revelation being accommodated to the intelligence of the age does not avail to remove the difficulty. It was not a matter beyond the comprehension of an infant world.

As to the principle of moral obligation, the source of the feeling that we ought to do that which we think right, the world is not yet agreed, nor, for practical purposes, is it very material that it should be so. That the feeling exists—implanted by the Power that made us—more or less in all persons of any degree of cultivation, under the name of conscience, sense of duty, or by whatever other name it may be known, will be universally admitted; and whether we adopt the view for which a comparatively small number of highly enlightened philosophers contend, viz.,

that the feeling which prompts us to do what we think right—a feeling which is at the root of all morals—is wholly the result of education (in the most enlarged sense of the word), being developed out of our social instincts; or whether we adopt the view that it is a kind of moral sense—an ultimate feeling implanted in all human beings, approving or disapproving of acts or affections without reference to consequences—all agree—not less the intuitionists than the utilitarians—that the feeling is there and that it is capable of being improved and strengthened by education; and the question, what is the origin of, or how we are to explain the feeling which all admit to be there, becomes comparatively unimportant.\*

The important question to determine is the practical one, namely, what is the right thing to do on the various occasions that present themselves in the course of the world's business?—what, in short, is the standard of duty? And this being a question depending rather upon reason and observation than upon sentiment, some hope may be indulged that the world may at length come to something like an agreement upon it.

Although mankind are still divided on this question, the opinion is, I think, gaining ground among thoughtful and intelligent men that, in judging of the morality of actions independently of a direct revelation of the will of God, or with regard to points to which any such revelation may

\* It is to this feeling that the author of *Dawning Lights* traces the first source of our knowledge of God:—‘In the sense that there is such a thing as duty—that we ought to sacrifice happiness, and even to die for the right—in that mysterious sense which we can neither create nor destroy, lies the true proof of the existence of a righteous God.’ (p. 70.)

Somewhat in the same way the elder Newman, in one of his latest publications, traces a Personal God in an argument to this effect: if we feel responsibility, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible. If in doing wrong we feel sorrow—if in doing right we feel serenity of mind, we have within us the image of some Person to whom our love and veneration look, in whose anger we are troubled.

not extend, we are to look to the consequences of such actions and observe whether their necessary tendency is to promote or diminish the general good, and to determine the moral rule or law accordingly. And so long as we are content to approve only of those moral rules or precepts which in their nature necessarily tend to promote the well-being of mankind, it is not very material whether we suppose that we have arrived at those rules through the intuitions of a moral sense, or by reflection on the general consequences of the lines of conduct which they sanction.

According to the latter view, God's commandments, written upon the hearts and consciences of men (to speak figuratively), do not go further than to say, Do what is right, what is just, &c. The answer to the question What is right, and what is just? we are to find out by observing the tendencies of different lines of conduct. We feel sure that His will is that we should endeavour to advance the well-being of His creatures. Those lines of conduct, therefore, of which the necessary tendency is to do this are as a general rule right. What is thus ascertained to be right it is God's will that we should do. And so we get to the root of ethical obligation.

It is objected by the intuitionists that it would be a sad state of things if the ethical determinations on which depend a man's welfare and his worth were left to be determined on each occasion by an intricate calculation of the remote effect of his volitions on the general interests of mankind. And so it would; but this supposes that the calculation is to be made on each occasion. This, however, is not the case. The ethical rule has been ascertained in this way; but man's conduct is determined by his habit of adhering to the rule, and not by a calculation in each case. We are creatures of habit and education; and a man's conduct on each occasion calling

for decision will depend upon the training he has received and the habits he has acquired.\*

The result is the same whether we suppose the rule to have been determined by a moral sense implanted in us by God or to have been the result of a careful inquiry into God's will as revealed to us in His works. The observance of the rule will depend upon the character of the man, and that, in its turn, will depend upon his temperament, his intelligence, and the moral and religious training that he has received.

It is the habit of divines to personify the conscience, to treat it as a marvellous faculty of a somewhat supernatural character, the judge of right and wrong, the supreme spiritual guide of

\* There is a great objection on the part of some of our moralists to allow the tendencies of action as affecting human happiness to be looked at in settling the moral rule. It would be, they say, to cultivate virtue from self-regarding motives, and that they cannot allow. Principal Shairp, in his *Studies of Poetry and Philosophy*, cites with approbation what Dr. Newman has described as 'a remarkable law of ethics which is well known to all who have given their minds to the subject. All virtue and goodness tend to make men powerful in this world, but they who aim at power have not the virtue. Again, virtue has its own reward, and brings with it the truest and highest pleasure; but they who cultivate virtue for the pleasure's sake are selfish, not religious (? virtuous), and will never have the pleasure, because they can never have the virtue.' (p. 401.)

This may be true, but it is not a valid argument for that for which it is cited, viz., that we do not cultivate or admire virtue from self-regarding motives. If what are called virtue and goodness did not tend to make men powerful in this world (that is, in the only sense in which it does tend to make men powerful, viz., in so far as power springs from the moral esteem in which its possessor is held), but the contrary; if what is called virtue had not its own reward; if its practice were not attended with pleasurable emotions; if it were not looked back upon with pleasurable feelings, but the contrary of both these, it would cease to be called virtue, and to be applauded and cultivated by good men.

Mr. Shairp, I presume, would say a man is not a good man who does good in the hope of pleasing God, and going to heaven: he does not love goodness for itself.

Plato does not allow that a man is just who acts from a sense of duty, and not from pleasure. Thus Wordsworth, in his Ode to Duty:—

'Serene will be our days, and bright

And happy will our nature be,

When love is an unerring light

And joy its own security.'



our lives. If we carefully consider the matter, I think we shall find that the conscience is no way distinguishable from what I have spoken of as a sense of duty or feeling of moral obligation—the feeling namely which prompts us to do what we think right, and which reproaches us when we do that which we know to be wrong: the parent of remorse when we refuse to listen to her voice.

The conscience tells us that we are to do that which we think right; but it does not itself supply the index to what is right. It may and often does err. At the instigation of an unenlightened or perverted conscience, crimes of the deepest dye have been perpetrated from the highest motives. As Mr. Lecky has observed, Philip II. and Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, zealous Roman Catholics, inflicted more suffering in obedience to their conscience than Nero or Domitian in obedience to their lusts.

Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded  
All the Apostles would have done as they did.

But though thus liable to error we must obey the dictates of our consciences on all occasions, or we are morally guilty. If a man's conscience lead him to do things injurious to others or himself, it is, so far as others are concerned, the business of the law to restrain the wrong. So far as the man himself is concerned, the only remedy is to seek by education to enlighten his conscience. He is at all times to do that which for the time being appears to him right.\*

\* This is very much the *Homo Mensura* doctrine of Protagoras, with regard to truth and falsehood.

'The Protagorean doctrine,' says Mr. Grote, 'when stated in its most general terms, is, that every man is and must be his own measure of truth and falsehood; that what appears to him true *is true to him*, however it may appear to others. That he cannot by any effort step out of or beyond his own individual belief, conviction, knowledge. That all his *cognita, credita, percepta, cogitata, &c.*

To return to my historical sketch. Society, with some rude system of law and morals, being established, and the principle of property generally recognised, civilisation might be expected thenceforward to proceed with comparatively rapid steps, especially in what relates to the material improvement of the condition of the people.

That it did not proceed more quickly—that the world did not make more rapid progress in developing the manifold resources that lie hidden in nature for promoting the comfort and well-being of mankind, may reasonably excite surprise. It would seem to be very much owing to that propensity, still observable in our race, which leads those who have attained to some degree of cultivation to look down with contempt on what they call material interests, which they deem proper to occupy vulgar minds only, and to direct their energies to the pursuit of the ideal rather than the practical in dealing with the problem of the world. As Professor Tyndall has remarked in one of his *Fragments of Science*, the ancients ‘found the uncontrolled exercise of the imagination too pleasant to spend much time in gathering and brooding over facts.’

Macaulay, in his article on Bacon in the *Edinburgh Review* (‘Collected Essays,’ vol. ii.), has described in a very vivid manner the contrast between the Baconian philosophy, of which the object is to multiply human enjoyment and to mitigate human suffering, and the transcendental philosophy of the school of Plato. ‘Two words,’ he says, ‘form the key to the

imply himself as cognoscens, credens, percipiens, cogitans, inseparably and indivisibly. That, in affirming an object, he is himself necessarily present as affirming subject, and that object and subject are only two sides of the same indivisible fact. That though there are some matters which all men agree in believing, there is no criterion at once infallible and universally recognised in matters where they dissent: moreover, the matters believed are just as much relative where all agree as where some disagree.’—Grote’s *Plato*, ii. 508.

Baconian doctrine: utility and progress. The ancient philosophy disdained to be useful and was content to be stationary . . . It did not condescend to the humble office of ministering to the comfort of human beings.' (p. 374.) Plato speaks slightly of the convenience of arithmetic for purposes of computation. It has a higher mission. 'The study of the properties of numbers,' he tells us, 'habituates the mind to the contemplation of pure truth, and raises us above the material universe.' (p. 386.)

In like manner Socrates explains to Glaucus 'that the use of astronomy is not to add to the vulgar comforts of life, but to assist in raising the mind to the contemplation of things which are to be perceived by the pure intellect alone.' (p. 389.)

There is the same disposition to disparage what is sometimes called the material philosophy in the present day. The language of transcendentalism is not quite the same, but it is equally at variance with the practical and the useful.

Macaulay proceeds to inquire what the Platonic philosophy and what the Baconian have done for mankind. He perhaps hardly does full justice to the Platonic philosophy. Though undervaluing the material and the useful, and too much addicted to the worship of the pure, as distinguished from the practical, intellect, Plato has been invaluable to mankind as a moral teacher. As observed by a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for April 1866, in an article on Grote's *Plato*: 'Amid all his changes there is one thing to which he is ever constant — the transcendent worth of virtue and wisdom (which he invariably identifies) and the infinitely superior eligibility of the just life, even if calumniated and persecuted, over the unjust, however honoured by man, and by whatever power and grandeur surrounded.' (p. 338.)

Mr. Grote also, although not attaching much value to the

positive results of Plato's philosophy, bears strong testimony to the value of his writings in diffusing a taste for free inquiry—the great business of philosophy. 'The process of philosophising,' he says, 'is one not naturally attractive except to a few minds; the more, therefore, do we owe to the colloquy of Socrates, and the writings of Plato, who handles it so as to diffuse the appetite for inquiry and for sifting dissentient opinions.' (Grote's *Plato*, i. 277.)

Macaulay, in the article already referred to, gives a very striking picture of what the Baconian philosophy has done in adding to the material comforts of mankind; and although we may admit that the improvement of the material sources of enjoyment is not all in all, nor is this by any means Bacon's view, yet it is at the bottom of all other improvement. It is the necessary condition of any advance in civilisation.

'It has,' he says, 'lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of forms unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendour of the day; it has extended the range of the human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all despatch of business; it has enabled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which move along without horses, and the ocean in ships which run ten knots an hour against the wind. These are but a part of its fruits. For it is a philosophy which never rests—which has never attained, which

is never perfect. Its law is progress. A point which yesterday was invisible is its goal to-day and will be its starting-post to-morrow.' (p. 399.)

There is something to be said therefore for the material results of science; and although it is the habit of many excellent people to lament that the present is a material age, and to direct all their efforts to fixing our attention upon higher things, I think we may, without calling in question the value of those higher things, feel reasonably satisfied that we have not gone far wrong, so long as the result of our endeavours is to diminish the physical sufferings, and to add to the material comforts of our fellow-creatures. These material aids to our well-being in this world, which the good people aforesaid affect to hold so cheap, are in fact that which distinguishes the present state of civilisation from a desolate wilderness; and they are so far from standing in the way of the higher cultivation, on which so much stress is properly laid, though not always with a just appreciation of its true nature, that they in fact prepare the way for it, and are the necessary condition precedent of its attainment.

I do not propose to go into the questions concerning materialism and spiritualism, with which metaphysicians and theologians have perplexed the world. Whether there be one order of being only, or two orders; whether the spiritual is a function only of the physical,\* or whether it is a thing apart,

\* Newton (before Hartley) conjectured that thought might be a vibration, a notion which Coleridge seems to have borrowed in those remarkable pantheistical lines of his—'shapings of the unregenerate mind' he calls them:—

'And what if all of animated nature  
Be but organic harps diversely framed,  
That tremble into thought as o'er them sweeps,  
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,  
At once the soul of each, and God of all.'

belonging to a higher order of life, is immaterial to my purpose, which is simply to consider how we may best advance the well-being of man—his spiritual, not less than his material well-being. For practical purposes it will hardly be denied that we know as much of the material world as of the spiritual. Of the essential nature either of matter or of spirit we know nothing, and, as Professor Huxley says, in one of his papers in the *Fortnightly Review*, ‘why trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important, we know nothing, and can know nothing.’ ‘We live,’ he says, ‘in a world full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable than it was before he entered it.’ If we take it that there are two orders of being, God is equally at the head of each. In this life at least the spiritual in man is manifested only in connection with the material,\* and is dependent for its due cultivation and development upon the well-being of the latter. Whether we consider the body as an instrument through which the mind, sitting apart, exercises its powers, or we consider both the two so mixed up that they must stand or fall together, in either view the care of the body is equally important. Thus far the problem of the connection between body and soul remains insoluble. We have the two sets of phenomena to which the names body and soul are affixed, but what is their bond of union we are wholly ignorant. Whether, in the improvement of our faculties, which may not unreasonably be looked for in the course of the progressive development which

\* ‘Je ne sais pas,’ dit un partisan de Locke, ‘comment je pense, mais je sais que je n’ai jamais pensé qu’à l’occasion de mes sens. Qu’il y ait des substances immatérielles et intelligentes, c’est de quoi je ne doute pas, mais qu’il soit impossible à Dieu de communiquer la pensée à la matière, c’est de quoi je doute fort. Je révere la puissance éternelle: il ne m’appartient de la borner; je n’affirme rien; je me contente de croire qu’il y a plus de choses possibles qu’on ne pense.—MICROMÉGAS.

seems the law of the world, the mystery may be solved, we can at present do no more than indulge in conjecture.

The world, and man's destiny there—especially when considered in connection with the large amount of evil, physical and moral, everywhere observable—are, it is often and truly said, a mystery ; and there is much, no doubt, that is inexplicable, and must, unless there should be some further development of our faculties, continue to be so. All our philosophy does not carry us much farther than the simple reflection of dear good *Dolly Winthrop* in one of her inimitable dialogues with *Silas Marner* : ‘ Eh, there’s trouble i’ this world, and there’s things as we can niver make out the rights on : and all as we have got to do is to trusten, Master Marner, to do the right thing as fur as we know, and to trusten.’ There is, however, much that we are capable of understanding ; and if, instead of perplexing ourselves with matters beyond the reach of our faculties and with the vain inquiry *why* things are as they are, we were content to keep within the limits of the soluble, and employ such faculties as God has given us to observe patiently and try to understand *how* they are constituted,\* and to make the best of them, the world would be much happier than it is. It is the part of science to observe and to verify the laws of nature, not to explain why they are as they are. Things proceed in this world, as I have before observed, in a definite order ; pleasures and ‘pains are distributed according to fixed laws which it is in our power to discover ; and, by accommodating our actions to these laws, ‘by moving,’ as it has been well expressed, ‘in harmony with the laws of nature,’ we may escape much suffering which otherwise is inevitable, and add to the happiness of ourselves and our fellow-creatures.

\* ‘Halt dich an *Wie* und frage nicht *Warum*.’—GÖTTE.

But we are not content to do this ; we insist on understanding the whole scheme of Providence—on comprehending the incomprehensible. We are ever for putting ourselves in the place of the Author of the universe, and judging all things according to our notions. We cannot resist the longing to imagine a Deity that we can understand in all things. From all time and among all people this yearning after such a Divinity has been felt, and the master spirits in each country have produced a divinity in accordance with their conception of what he should be. As Göthe sings :—

Ein jeglicher das beste was er kennt,  
Er Gott, ja seinen Gott benennt,  
Ihm Himmel und Erde übergibt—  
Ihn fürchtet und wo möglich liebt.

It cannot however be denied that there is a large amount of evil in the world ; some of it of a kind that it is out of our power to remove. Much of it, however, is such as it is in our power to remove ; and, of that portion which is irremediable, much is attended with compensating advantages.

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out.—SHAKESPEARE.

And although this does not prove the non-existence of the evil, it may at least be urged in answer to those pious divines who assert that if we look to this world only we must give up the benevolence of the Deity. The existence of some amount of suffering is by no means incompatible with the Divine goodness. Looking at it as a means to an end, that end the well-being, physical and moral, of mankind, we see in the great majority of cases that the apparent evil—the suffering—has the effect of securing a more than preponderant amount of good. Often it attends the transition to a more healthy state of things than had before existed. Whether or not the end



could have been attained in any better or other way it is not given to us with our limited faculties to pronounce.

All pain is undoubtedly an evil to him who suffers it; but this evil may be more than compensated by attendant good, if not to the individual sufferer, to society. Compensation is the law everywhere inscribed in the processes of Nature. I would ask, Is it possible to imagine a state of things in which the good which there is in the world should exist without any admixture of what we call Evil? We can imagine progress

From good to better ever self-surpassed.

But can there be love without the need of love, truth without possibility of error, virtue without comparative vice? 'May not,' as Miss Cobbe has observed, 'the accomplishment of the highest of all possible good, the training to virtue of finite spirits, be as incompatible with a thornless and sinless world as would be the making of a circle and a triangle having the same mathematical properties.' To complain that God has allowed evil is to find fault not only with the worse side of things, but with their very constitution, and with *good* itself.

It seems to be the scheme of Providence to regard the whole rather than individuals; the individual suffering ministering to the happiness of the whole. Murderers and thieves are evils to society, and society does well, and acts no doubt in accordance with the will of God, in repressing them without regard to the suffering necessarily to be with that view inflicted on them; but this does not argue malevolence in the Deity. It appears to be the result of a general law, perhaps unavoidable, for the government of the world, which on the whole is productive of good. But although society is under the necessity of repressing malefactors with a strong hand, and is therefore justified in doing so, society must

not conceal from itself that it is in a great measure responsible for their existence, owing to its neglect to make due provision for their education; and, in order thoroughly to justify the violent steps necessary for putting down the evil, it ought first to remedy its own neglect. We must ever remember that the source of the malefactor's degraded condition, with its attendant misery and consequent crime, is in him rather a misfortune than a fault, and that it can only be effectually remedied by infusing at an early stage more enlightened notions and juster principles into his mind.

The unequal distribution of the goods of life, material, moral, and intellectual, among beings endowed with similar faculties is one of the questions that have perplexed inquirers. Some degree of inequality is perhaps inevitable in a world governed by general laws. Nor is it in itself an evil. It must not however be supposed that there is a corresponding inequality of happiness. No doubt squalid poverty must always be a wretched state of suffering. But, with such improvements as might and ought to be made in the condition of the working classes, the difference between their happiness and that of the wealthier classes would probably be inconsiderable. It is not so much upon what we have, as upon what we are and what we do, that happiness depends. 'It is,' says Jeremy Taylor, 'the body which makes the clothes warm and not the clothes the body; and the spirit of a man makes felicity and content, not the spoils of a rich fortune wrapped about a sickly and uneasy soul.' Mr. Stopford Brooke, the clergyman already mentioned, who has had more than the ordinary means of forming a judgment on the subject, speaking of the present condition of things, says, in his review of Ruskin's Lectures on Art in *Macmillan's Magazine* for October 1870, p. 424:—

'Those who have gone from room to room in the courts

which Ruskin thinks so unendurable, know that there is on the whole as much happiness among them as among the upper classes; that there is more self-sacrifice, more of the peace of hard work, more good humour, more faithfulness to others in misfortune, more everyday righteousness.\*

I have already called attention to the fact that almost nothing has been given to mortals without labour, and that they have been left to find out everything for themselves. But this constitution of things is so far from being an unmixed evil, or ultimately an evil at all, that it is productive of enjoyment. There is pleasure in exertion, whether bodily or mental, and in difficulties overcome. 'Work,' it has been somewhere observed, 'is the duty, privilege, pleasure, and great safeguard of our lives.' The contest with pain and apparent evil, which forms a large part of the business of life is itself a source of agreeable occupation. Curiosity, which, more aptly than 'wonder,' may be styled 'the seed of knowledge,' has been implanted in our nature to stimulate our inquiries, and there is intense pleasure in the act of discovery. Thus the very things which often are looked upon as among the evils of humanity—our wants and our ignorance—become themselves, in the industry which they render necessary and the exercise they afford to our faculties, a source of enjoyment.

Mandeville, in his notes to the *Fable of the Bees*, goes so far as to say that it is evil alone which makes us sociable creatures, and that 'the moment evil ceases the society must be spoiled if not utterly destroyed.' It is not necessary to go this length, but it is undoubtedly true that, constituted as we

\* Life, even in the lowest state of destitution, seems on the whole to be deemed worth having. The poorer classes among the Chinese who do not shrink from suicide, prefer to live in what appears to us a state of intolerable wretchedness. Lecky conjectures that the lower animals are happier than man; and semi-barbarians than civilised man. (*History of Morals*, ii. 89.).

are, life would be comparatively dull without the motive for exertion presented by the struggle with the apparent ills of life on behalf of ourselves and our fellow-creatures. With our imperfect understandings we do not always see the compensating good. To a child it no doubt appears evil to be told to put aside its playthings and go to its lessons; but the child would err if on this account it concluded that its parent was a malevolent being.

Hume has suggested, as an argument against the benevolence of the Deity, that we might have been allured by pleasure, instead of being prompted by pain, to avoid what is hurtful to us. We are in fact to a great extent so allured by the feeling of satisfaction which we ever experience on having done what we think right.

. . . . In his soul he felt that peace  
Which follows painful duty well performed:  
Perfect and heavenly peace—the peace of God.—SOUTHEY.

Still it must be admitted that there is irremediable evil in the world for which we can discover no compensating advantage. Why this should be so, or how its existence is to be reconciled with the wisdom and goodness of God (beyond the suggestion already made, that it may be the unavoidable result of general laws which are themselves a necessity), it has not been given to us, with our limited faculties, to comprehend. The secret counsels of God we must be content to leave a mystery. In the words of the late much lamented Mr. Clough, at once a poet and a profound thinker,

It seems His Newer Will,  
We should not think at all of Him,\* but turn,  
And of the world that He has given us make  
What best we may.

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\* According to Professor Tyndall, theology is to give place to science and poetry. 'The position of science,' he says, 'is already assured, but I think the

From the decided predominance of good in the general scheme of the world, especially displayed in the law of progress, in the desire implanted within us for what is better, and the power given to us of satisfying that desire, we may be convinced of the benevolence of its Author. In that faith we must rest, and apply ourselves to contend with evil in every form in which it presents itself, moral and physical; and it is some encouragement to us in this task, that all history shows that man has hitherto so contended with some success; and, with the great advances now being made by science, he may go on so to contend with increasing means and with the prospect of much greater success.

Our quarrel with the Church and her rulers is that, instead of doing this—instead of applying the vast resources at their command in removing or alleviating so much of the evil existing in the world as is remediable—they have devised, or rather adopted from the traditions of a remote age, an imaginary origin of this evil with a mysterious and somewhat technical scheme of escape from it. Instead of carefully searching out the causes of the misery in the world, and using their best endeavours to amend, and to put those who look up to them in the way of amending, so much as admits of amendment—a task which would afford an ample field for the exercise of all their powers—they assume that God is angry with the beings He has created, and requires to be conciliated, and that the great business of

poet will have a great part to play in the future of the world. To him it is given for a long time to come to fill those shores which the recession of the theologic tide has left exposed. To him, when he rightly understands his mission, and does not flinch from the tonic discipline which it assuredly demands, we have a right to look for that heightening and brightening of life which so many of us need. He ought to be the interpreter of that power which as

Jehovah, Jove, or Lord

has hitherto filled and strengthened the human heart.'—*Fragments of Science*, p. 106.

life, and the especial work of the Church, is to bring about this reconciliation between God and His creatures; and thus they withdraw attention from the causes of evil that are real, and with which they might contend successfully, and expend the energies and vast resources of an immense establishment upon the vain task of attempting to give effect to an imaginary scheme of redemption.\*

On the question of the truth or probability of this great scheme of a Fall and Redemption, I shall have some remarks to make in a subsequent letter. For the present I will merely observe that it is founded on a view of God's providence formed in what may be called the infancy of the world by a very singular people—a narrow-minded and selfish race of men, of a fervid religious temperament, it is true, and strongly imbued with the monotheistic doctrine of the Eastern races, but not otherwise distinguished by genius or cultivation of any kind—a view, moreover, which is admittedly at variance with what we find now prevailing as well among that people as in every other part of the world.

In other matters the fallacy of what is called the wisdom of antiquity has been long recognised—*antiquitas sæculi juventus mundi*; but it would seem that in the highest matter of all—the problem of the world, and man's destiny there—we are

\* Among the minor evils arising from the importance attached by our Church to belief in its exclusive scheme of salvation are the expense and labour, often attended with loss of life, bestowed on foreign missions for converting the heathen to Christianity. Churchmen, holding the doctrine of exclusive salvation, can hardly, if sincere, do other than encourage every effort that can be made, at whatever cost, to promote the spread of a faith fraught, as their system assumes, with such momentous consequences.

The history of the last few years of our relations with China shows with what baneful effects the efforts of the missionaries to introduce Christianity into that kingdom have been attended; moreover, entirely defeating their own object, by destroying all chance of the friendly commercial intercourse between the two countries, from which alone any hope of an improved system of religion in China can reasonably be entertained.

content still to resort for instruction to the infancy of the world, and to set up the limited knowledge of past ages against the enlarged experience and intelligence of our own. Surely it is not reasonable to suppose that the ancient Hebrews, with their very scanty knowledge of the works of God—however confident may have been the pretensions of their prophets and rulers to direct personal intercourse with the Author of the Universe, and however pure and lofty their devotional spirit—should be able to draw more correct inferences than ourselves respecting the theory of creation, and man's place in the world, his aims and his duties.

A great deal of evil that is really remediable is allowed to remain in the world, from the vague notion that there is something mysterious in its nature—that pain and suffering are specially appointed by an all-wise and benevolent Creator, and are in some inscrutable way intended for our good. Some of our popular writers who aim at giving a higher tone to our lighter literature, and at making fiction the vehicle of moral and religious instruction, are apt to indulge in this kind of sentimentalism. Lady Hardy, who may be taken as a fair specimen of the writers of this class, thus moralises on the question of evil in the world in her, in many respects, beautiful story of *Paul Wynter's Sacrifice*. The two heroines have been indulging in a little speculation how things in this world might be improved. 'They forget (she says), in their foolish search, that He, the great designer of human nature and human lives, makes all things fit all things rightly. That which to our blind eyes seems crooked to-day will be made straight to-morrow. The great mass of men's lives that looks like a tangled skein of thread, of many-coloured sins and sorrows running confusedly among it, marring the pattern and throwing the

whole out of gear, will all come right at last. When the glow of Divine love falls over all, the colours soften and blend harmoniously, the design works itself out according to God's will, and, in spite of the cross purposes that harass men's lives, we feel that all is well.'

But we ought not to feel that all is well; we ought to feel that there is much that is not well and that might be made better by our exertions. How much evil which might have been avoided is patiently endured, under the feeling that it is God's appointment, ordained for some wise, inscrutable purpose, and that we have only to trust in God's wisdom and goodness, and that all will be right in the end. True, we ought so to trust that is a faith never to be shaken; and it is true in a certain sense that this evil is of God's appointment—i.e., it arises under the system He has ordained for the government of the world; but it is evil for which under that system He has for the most part placed within our reach a remedy, and the evil goes on to exist only because we have failed to study and understand that system, and to govern ourselves by the laws which He has ordained. And for this we ought to take blame to ourselves, and to resolve that this shall be so no longer; instead of indulging in a sentimental optimism, and satisfying our conscience, as too many of us are apt to do, with the reflection that it is the appointment of God, and that it is ours to submit and humbly adore the inscrutable wisdom of God, who has seen fit to hide His purposes from mankind.

No doubt many excellent persons have derived comfort and consolation on the occasion of some great grief from the feeling (inspired by early education) that it is the dispensation of a merciful and sympathising Father, and is in some mysterious way specially intended for their good. We have an instance of



this in Lady Barker, who, in one of her delightful letters on *Station Life in New Zealand*, referring to the loss of her baby, says:—

‘In such a grief as this I find the conviction of the reality and depth of the Divine sympathy is my only true comfort. The tenderest human love falls short of the feeling that, without any words to express our sorrow, God knows all about it; that He would not willingly afflict or grieve us, and that, therefore, the anguish which wrings our hearts is absolutely necessary in some mysterious way for our highest good.’

Far be it from me to desire to disturb a soothing faith of this nature, however unable I may be to concur in the grounds on which it rests. The delusion, if it be a delusion, is in this case a harmless one. It is only when we are told that pain, from which there is an escape within our power, ought to be endured because it is of God’s appointment and is intended in some inscrutable way for our good, that I protest against entertaining such unworthy notions of the Deity. The pain is not more of God’s appointment than are the means of alleviation or escape which He has placed within our reach, and which we cannot doubt that it is His will that we should use, just as in the case of all other evil with which, equally by His appointment, we have to contend in the battle of life.

The pious notion that suffering is of God’s appointment—intended in some inscrutable manner for our benefit—has caused much pain to be endured which might have been spared. Prolonged and fatal suffering, such as not unfrequently attends the close of life, is not more of God’s appointment than is any other suffering which is our lot in the course of life, and for which we do not hesitate to seek the means of alleviation which God has placed within our reach. If suffering

be in itself good for us, why do we resort to chloroform during painful operations?\*

The fact that the humblest animal that crawls the earth is liable to pain and suffering strictly analogous to what we suffer should make us hesitate to presume that the suffering to which human beings are exposed is specially of God's appointment for some moral end. That mysterious disease, the *empusa muscæ*, eating into the viscera of a fly, is surely not less of God's appointment than the cancer preying on the human form.†

No doubt it is noble to submit without repining to suffering which is unavoidable or which is required for some good end. 'The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?' But there Jesus believed that his self-sacrifice was demanded for a great end. Where it is voluntarily endured for no good end, it is mere asceticism,‡ a feeling so rife in the early ages of Christianity.

\* It appears from the following letter to the *Times* of May 11, 1870, soon after the death of Sir James Simpson, that the use of chloroform has been objected to on religious grounds:—

'Dr. Simpson, on first propounding the theory of the application of chloroform to patients requiring surgical aid, was stoutly opposed by certain Calvinistic objectors, who held that to check the sensation of pain in connection with "visitations of God" was to contravene the decrees of an all-wise Creator.

'What was his answer? That the Creator, during the process of extracting the rib from Adam, must necessarily have adopted a somewhat corresponding artifice, "for did not God throw Adam into a deep sleep?" The pietists were satisfied, and the discoverer triumphed over ignoble and ignorant prejudice.'—J. S. LAURIE, Temple, May 9.

† In More's *Utopia*, persons afflicted with painful and incurable disorders are persuaded to allow themselves to be put to death; but they must not destroy themselves 'before the priest and counsel have allowed the cause of their death.' Vol. ii. pp. 134–137, Ed. of 1808.

‡ The spirit of asceticism still lingers among us. One is sorry to see our laureate wasting—to use no harsher term—his great powers to foster this baneful superstition in that otherwise beautiful episode of the *Holy Grail*. The fair saint to whom is vouchsafed the vision of the holy grail had earned that privilege, we are told by Sir Percival, her brother, by prayer and fasting

. . . 'till the sun

Shone and the wind blew thro' her; and I thought

She might have risen and floated when I saw her.'

Asceticism itself may perhaps be referred to the common infirmity of our nature shown in pushing to a morbid excess our efforts to escape evil. Observing the mischiefs which have proceeded from excess of sensual gratification we have come to regard the opposite extreme of this indulgence as in itself a good. Just contempt of frivolity or low pleasures,\* and aspiration after magnanimity, have degenerated into asceticism. 'It is a great misery,' says Pascal, 'to be able to take pleasure in things low and contemptible; and a man is more to be pitied for being able to divert himself with things frivolous and low than for being afflicted with real miseries.' To be able to make sacrifices for worthy ends is the first step towards attaining to a great character. But to make sacrifices we must be ready to endure suffering. Hence has grown up the fallacious notion that suffering is in itself a good, and that it is pleasing to the Deity; and so it has taken the religious shape of asceticism, to which in one form or another the Church has always been favourable.

The feelings of our religious nature require to be kept under the guidance of reason not less than those of our physical nature. They are to be cultivated and controlled; by no means to be stifled or eradicated. Under their influence, and

How much healthier is Milton's conception of a saintly lady:—

'A thousand livried angels lacquey her,  
Driving far off all things of sin and guilt,  
And in clear dream and solemn vision  
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,  
Till oft converse with heavenly habitants  
Begin to cast a beam o'er the earthly shape,  
The unpolluted temple of her mind,  
And turn it by degrees to the soul's essence,  
Till all be made immortal.'

\* Where tiny pleasures occupy the place  
Of glories and of duties.—LANDOR.

aided by the force and elevation of character which they are capable of bestowing, we may attain to heights of virtue, and may accomplish deeds which, in the absence of such feelings, would be quite impossible. What is to be guarded against is the superstitious notion that persons so influenced are acting under the special inspiration or guidance of Providence, and that what they do is therefore necessarily right. Nothing is more natural than to entertain such feelings. Oliver Cromwell has been accused of hypocrisy in his frequent professions of belief that God was fighting on his side; but there seems no sufficient ground for saying that the belief was not sincere. In his memorable despatch to the Speaker of the House of Commons after the battle of Naseby, he says: 'Sir, this is no other but the hand of God, and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him.'\* And no doubt this belief, so fervently entertained by him and shared by the troops under his command, inspired his army with a courage almost more than human. But it does not appear that Cromwell ever allowed his reliance on Providence to lead him to neglect the natural and practical means necessary to ensure success. Happy is it when there is this combination of faith and judgment. It was not wanting in Mahomet. When they were about

\* Cromwell urged this argument of Providence against the Scotch ecclesiastics, and asked them whether the Lord had not declared against them. But the ministers thought that the same event which to their enemies were judgments to them were trials; and they replied 'that the Lord had only hid His face for a time from Jacob.'

Addison has a pleasant paper on this subject in one of his *Saturday Spectators*. 'An old maiden gentlewoman,' he says, 'whom I shall conceal under the name of *Nemesis*, is the greatest discoverer of judgments that I ever met with. She can tell you what sin it was that set such a man's house on fire, or blew down his barns. She has a crime for every misfortune that can befall any of her acquaintance, and when she hears of a robbery or a murder, enlarges more on the guilt of the suffering person than on that of the thief or assassin. In short, she is so good a Christian, that whatever happens to herself is a trial, and whatever happens to her neighbours is a judgment.'

to encamp for the night, his companion proposed to turn the horses loose and commit them to Providence. 'Tie them up,' said Mahomet, 'and commit them to Providence.' So Hesiod exhorted the countryman to pray for the harvest, but to do it with his hand upon the plough.\* It is the time-honoured injunction, 'Ora et labora.'

The King of Prussia, in his recent great war with the French, with his rather obtrusive piety, reiterated his belief that God was ever fighting on his side. And no doubt God was fighting on his side in the only sense in which He ever fights on one side or the other. The King of Prussia had been at the pains to bring himself within the conditions on which, according to the invariable laws which God has ordained for the government of the world, success depends. On the one side, at the outset, a vast and overwhelming armament, perfect discipline, intimate knowledge of the seat of war, incomparable leadership, and, to crown the whole, a sense that they were engaged in a defensive warfare, fighting for their hearths and homes. On the other side a demoralised army, inferior in number, not adequately equipped; great want of discipline, and defective intelligence on the part of the leaders. These were the causes that ensured victory to the Germans. There was no special interference of Providence in their favour in this defensive war any more than in their former aggressive war against the Danes.

The Ancient Romans certainly did not neglect the material means necessary for ensuring the success of their armies, and we have no difficulty in accounting by natural causes for their

\* Lord Palmerston seems to have been impressed with a similar feeling when, as Home Secretary, in reply to the memorial of the Edinburgh Presbytery, praying that he would appoint a public fast-day as a means of staying the cholera, he suggested that it would be well to cleanse their drains before they sought to protect the people against physical disease by the ceremony of national humiliation.

almost uniform victories. Cicero, however, expressing, it may be supposed, the national sentiment, attributed the distinguished success which attended their arms, and the greatness achieved by them, to their firm belief in an overruling Providence:—

‘Quam volumus, licet, Patres Conscripti, nos amemus, tamen nec numero Hispanos, nec robore Gallos, nec calliditate Pœnos, nec artibus Græcos, nec denique hoc ipso hujus gentis et terræ domestico nativoque sensu Italos ipsos et Latinos, sed pietate et religione, atque hâc unâ sapientiâ, quod deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique prospeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superavimus.’

It is so much more simple and level to ordinary capacities to refer the events which we see happening around us to an overruling Providence specially interfering on each occasion than to the same overruling Providence acting by general and invariable laws, that we need not be surprised that this is the common belief, however much at variance with the conclusions arrived at by a careful observation of facts. And we naturally refer those events of which we approve to the hand of Providence; those of which we disapprove to the ordinary course of nature or to the agency of wicked men or, possibly, of spirits. In the story of *Peveril of the Peak*, Lady Peveril, in referring to the restoration of the royal family, describes it as a work wrought by the direct hand of Providence. It probably—so much are we creatures of habit—did not occur to that lady, if she ever existed, nor to one in a hundred of the readers of the story, that the restoration of Charles II. was not more the work of Providence than the deposition, trial, and execution of Charles I.\*

\* ‘Have you heard of the accident on the river? Two men thrown out of a boat, and one providentially saved.’ ‘And the other,’ said Mr. Barker, ‘providentially drowned?’ *Bachelor of the Albany*—SAVAGE.

Lady Barker, whom I have already quoted, makes a singular display of religious sentimentalism on the occasion of her narrowly escaping shipwreck on her voyage to Calcutta. The vessel had been caught in a cyclone and entirely disabled. For almost a fortnight they drifted about in a waterlogged condition, enduring unspeakable horrors, of which Lady B. gives a very graphic account in *Good Words for the Young* (December 1870). Happily, the authorities at Calcutta had despatched a vessel in search of the packet, which was long overdue, and this vessel, having fallen in with the packet, brought it into Calcutta; and so Lady Barker and the other passengers and crew were saved. They owed their escape to the humanity and forethought of those who sent out the relieving vessel—*under Providence* it is usual to say; but as whatever happens in the world is under Providence, this phrase (like the D.V. which our ostentatiously pious people are fond of repeating) seems superfluous.

There was a special service in the cathedral on the occasion, and Lady Barker says they were very thankful to God, 'especially when it was ascertained that many ships had been lost in that very cyclone'—no vessel, I presume, 'having been despatched to their relief. Did it enhance Lady Barker's gratitude that the special Providence which she assumes saved her vessel allowed the others to perish? The reasonable supposition surely is that Lady Barker's vessel was saved, and that the others perished, through the operation of the general laws by which the world is governed, without any special interference either on behalf of Lady Barker or in neglect of the others. Such special thanks as were called for on the occasion were due to the authorities who sent out the relieving vessel, seeing that had it not been sent, Lady Barker and her vessel in all probability would have perished.

I am unable to reconcile the existence of suffering with the notion of a Divine government of the world by special Providence as commonly understood. That an all-powerful and perfectly benevolent Being, governing the world by special interferences, should witness suffering without being prompted to relieve it, seems to me to be a contradiction in terms. We may disguise it as we will—call it a mystery, and reverently trust that the whole is, in some way, unintelligible to our limited faculties, intended for our good—the fact remains, that an unspeakable amount of suffering which might be spared is, upon the theory of a special Providence, specially and purposely inflicted on His creatures by a Being whom we call merciful. To regard the suffering which we witness as the necessary result of general laws for the government of the universe—a constitution of things which we must suppose unavoidable—is at least not open to the objection that it makes God the direct and voluntary Author of the suffering.

It is a very common mistake to suppose that a government of the world by general laws is less a government of God or an overruling Providence than a government by special interferences. Not only is it equally a government of God, but it is a more reasonable notion and every way more in accordance with the highest views of a Divine government. Benevolent persons, under a general superintending Providence, would, if reasonable, be more disposed to aid the poor and the distressed than under a special Providence. In the former case they feel that they are supplementing the purposes of the Deity. The purpose in the particular instance having become incapable of fulfilment by reason of the generality of the laws, they come in aid to do that which they feel sure is in accordance with the general design of Providence. But under the special Providence theory they cannot feel this assurance: they must



rather feel that instead of coming in aid they are contravening the Divine purpose. For they must assume, under the supposition of a special Providence, that if the Deity willed the relief to be given He would have given it. For how much do we on this theory make Providence answerable!\*

The evil that is the result of general laws may cause the same degree of suffering to the afflicted person, but at least he has not the distress of thinking that his suffering is intentionally inflicted by the God whom he desires to venerate.† Though there be suffering under the general laws, there is the satisfaction of thinking that in most cases those general laws, if due attention be given to them, show a way of escape from the like suffering in future; for others at least, if not always for ourselves. And my prayer shall be that of the poet:—

\* Wrecks on the coast of Cornwall, not so long ago, were regarded as special gifts of Providence to the Cornish men. 'Providential wrecks' they were called, and were devoutly prayed for.

† We have an instance, in one of the published letters of the late Mr. Barham, of a struggle (though he hardly acknowledges it to himself) to break through the conventional insincerity (hypocrisy Mr. Barham calls it) which requires a clergyman to profess to believe that any great grief by which he is overtaken is specially designed by God in some inscrutable way for his good, and to acquiesce in it accordingly.

Mr. Barham, on the death of his favourite son, the youngest, writes thus to Mrs. Hughes, the one friend to whom he opened his heart without reserve:—

. . . . 'I must tell you that I am not—that I fear—I *fear* I never shall be—prepared to receive this dispensation with due submission. Every day seems to throw me farther back from the state of mind in which I ought to be. I cannot—I can *not* reconcile myself to my loss, and to say otherwise were sheer hypocrisy. All this is very wrong, indefensible, sinful! I know it—I feel it to be so—yet I cannot help it! God soften my heart!—at present I fear He is hardening it like Pharaoh's.'—*Life of R. H. Barham*, vol. ii. p. 95.

It is enough to have to bear one's grief—seeking, it may be, to derive some consolation from the reflection that one has done all in one's power to obviate the calamity. But if I am told that I must admit that it was specially designed by an all-wise and benevolent Creator for my good, like Mr. Barham I feel unable to do so, though I do not therefore, with him, think that God is hardening my heart. I will not say it is well, but I will do my best to make it not so bad as at first it seems to be, and possibly to turn my affliction to some good account.

And if I maun afflicted be  
To serve some wise design,  
Then man my soul with firm resolve  
To bear and not repine.—BURNS.

I am far from saying that the removal of evil, physical and moral, from the world, and the advancement of man's well-being and happiness here is the only pursuit worthy of engaging the attention of mankind, or that it is sufficient to satisfy all man's higher aspirations. The old questions which have forced themselves upon the attention of thoughtful men in all ages—whence man came and whither he is going, and what is to be the end of all his strivings—will still present themselves: and for those who have leisure and imaginative faculty for such high speculation, there can be no more interesting pursuit. All I wish to contend for is that those who are content to confine their energies to what they see to be practical and useful to themselves and their fellow-creatures in what regards their well-being and happiness in this world, are not to be deemed less entitled to the esteem and gratitude of mankind than those who indulge in lofty aspirations after the unseen and the spiritual. With regard to the former, we have at least the satisfaction of feeling that progress is certainly made. From day to day we acquire a greater command over the things which concern this life, and the means of happiness and the diminution of suffering in this world. With regard to the latter speculations, lofty and interesting as they are, it is doubtful whether (apart from what is claimed by the Church for direct revelation) any progress has been made in the last 2,000 years.

Whether we are destined for a future existence or not, I cannot admit that this world is nought, or that its concerns are not worthy of our most earnest attention. I cannot doubt

The mistake which enthusiastic religionists like the late John Sterling—who, although spurning ‘the hollow and spurious support of a despotic priesthood,’ yet have an undoubting faith in ‘higher than visible things,’—are apt to make, is that they forget how much there is on this earth worthy of filling their highest thoughts and engaging their warmest affections. With them the battle of life is too little with the outward world and its imperfections, and too much with themselves and their weaknesses. Like the Stoics of old they are ever striving after an unattainable self-perfection. ‘There is,’ says Sterling, ‘a godlike within us that feels itself akin to the gods; and if we are told that both the godlike and the gods are dreams, we can but answer that so to dream is better than to wake and find ourselves nothing.’ True: but why assume that we are nothing if not godlike? Humanity is something to live for; and if, instead of dreaming of the godlike, and striving after something higher than human nature, we would direct our efforts to improving, and, so far as possible, perfecting, humanity, our labour would not be lost.

. . . . . Macht dann  
Der süsse Wahn der süssern Wahrheit Platz.—LESSING.

However pleasant the dream of the godlike may be, it must not be forgotten that whilst these enthusiasts are dreaming they

case of the Commonwealth as a kind of common property, which, like the air and water, belongs to everybody, I set myself to consider in what way mankind might be best served, and what service I was myself best fitted to perform.’

Lives of great men all remind us  
We may make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us  
Footprints in the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,  
Some forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, may take heart again.—LONGFELLOW.

are apt to be neglecting to do the good which otherwise they might do in this world to themselves and others.

It has been profoundly observed by Professor Huxley, in one of his *Lay Sermons*, 'that the improvement of natural knowledge, however low the aim of those who have commenced it, has not only conferred practical benefits on man, but in so doing has effected a revolution in their conceptions of the universe, and of themselves, and has profoundly altered their modes of thinking and their views of right and wrong. I say (he continues) that natural knowledge, seeking to satisfy natural wants, has found the ideas which can alone still spiritual cravings. I say that natural knowledge, in desiring to ascertain the laws of comfort, has been driven to discover those of conduct and to lay the foundations of a new morality.' (p. 14.)

At the same time I wish emphatically to say that there is nothing in the system I advocate which in any degree calls in question the worth of moral goodness, or the great truth that our highest happiness depends mainly on the mind that is within us rather than on the circumstances that are without us. It does not, as has been objected to it, say: 'Were the laws and government in good order all would be well with us, and the rest may take care for itself;' but it does say that if the laws and government be *not* good it will not be well with us; and in that case there will be small chance for rest.

Nor is it true that this system is adverse, as it is sometimes contended, to the highest culture—to whatever tends to elevate and purify the inward primary powers of man; all that has helped to exalt man's life to its present spiritual height—to religion, morality, poetry, the love of the beautiful in every form. To act upon it is not to undervalue the divine and the spiritual, but to insist that what is called the divine and the spiritual shall be kept in due subordination to the reason

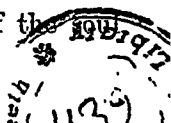
and the practical faculty of man, and shall not be allowed to degenerate into superstition and fanaticism. If the imagination be not constantly held in check by the reason in all that relates to our conduct in life, we shall presently be lost in sentiment and *Werterism*. To many dispositions it is pleasant to range at large in the regions of fancy, and to yield to impulse rather than to listen to the dictates of reason—obeying, as they are apt to flatter themselves, the honest part of their nature. It was, as Mr. Lewis has remarked in his *Life of Göthe*, ‘precisely this abandonment to impulse, this disregard of the grave remonstrances of reason and good sense, which distinguished the Werter epoch.’ It was no doubt a shock to Cyrus’s feeling of what was right to be told that he was wrong in awarding the big coat to the big boy and the little coat to the little boy. But our feelings, no less than our imagination, must submit to the correction of our reason. ‘The judgment,’ as Burke says, ‘is for the greater part employed in throwing stumbling-blocks in the way of the imagination and dissipating the scenes of its enchantment, and in tying us down to the disagreeable yoke of our reason.’\*

The belief in a future life, and in the existence of the soul as a thing apart from the body, has been entertained in all ages of the world. It is consolatory to anticipate a state hereafter in which suffering virtue shall at length receive its reward; and even if this expectation should be considered to be a delusion, it is hardly one which it can be the interest of humanity to dispel. A state of future retribution has also

\* It is the reflection how much of the evil in the world may be traced to the propensity to let sentiment lord it over intellect, that reconciles one to the maxim of Talleyrand, ‘Méfions-nous de notre premier mouvement, et n’y cédon’s jamais sans examen.’ Our good impulses as well as our evil passions stand in need of the correction of reason.

been invoked in aid of the legislature, as a supplement to law, by which we may be assured that 'crimes unwhipped of justice' on this earth, will hereafter meet their due punishment at the hands of an all-seeing Deity. It is, however, easy to show that the legislator can derive but little aid from such a source. The suffering with which the wicked are threatened in a future state (so far as it can have any effect in deterring from crime in this world) is wanting in the two qualities most conducive to the efficacy of punishment, *namely, the certainty of its infliction, and the prospect of that infliction following speedily on the offence.* So obvious is the imperfection of the punishment in these respects, that it has been endeavoured to supply the deficiency by supposing the suffering to be of infinite intensity and of eternal duration. Those who, under the different religious systems of the world, have been considered as the expositors of the will of the Almighty, have widely differed as to the acts which they suppose to be the objects of this punishment; and their denunciations of the wrath of heaven against offenders are often calculated to thwart rather than to aid the views of an enlightened earthly legislator. Whatever opinions, therefore, may be entertained as to the probability of a future life, it seems inconsistent alike with the wisdom and with the benevolence of the Deity that He should have recourse to any means of repressing crime in this world at once so inefficacious and so cruel. Moreover, the habit of relying at all upon the dread of punishment in a future state as a deterrent from vice and crime, is in itself not to be commended, inasmuch as it tends to make us neglect the more efficacious preventive means of attaining the end desired which are in our power, in the shape of early training and education.

The belief in a future life, and the existence of the



after death, merely, is a different question. It is a subject of high and interesting speculation; but it seems beyond the scope of the present letter. A future life, in the view which I take, is not required to supplement the present one.\*

What, then, is the result of the problem of the world, according to the natural system? The conclusions seem to be these:—

That the providential government of the world is conducted by general and invariable laws. That these laws being invariable, we are able, by careful observation and study, to discover them and to regulate our conduct in conformity with them; and that our only hope of well-being in the world depends on our doing this.

That nearly the whole of man's suffering in the world is the result of ignorance or neglect of these laws.

That the physical improvement of the world—all that distinguishes its present state from a barren wilderness and fits it for a habitation for man—has arisen from investigating the forces of nature, and the constitution of the material substances of which the earth is composed, and turning them to account for the advantage of man.

That this improvement has been progressive from the earliest ages, and that the world is capable of endless further improvement.

That the inquiry into the resources of nature physical, moral, and intellectual, affords ample scope for the exercise of man's highest powers, each step of discovery being a step in the progress of the world's well-being.

That as the physical world is capable of cultivation and

\* I have suggested in an Appendix at the end of the volume some of the grounds commonly relied on for believing in a future state of existence, independently of a supernatural revelation.

improvement without limit, so is the moral and spiritual world; and that in both cultivation is all in all: without it the world would be a wilderness and man a savage.

That in the order of time the material well-being of man is the first consideration. Until this has been attained, there is no chance for the higher cultivation.

That the passions with which we are endowed are not in themselves evil: they are necessary to stimulate our exertions, and are capable of receiving a wholesome or a baneful direction; and that it mainly depends on early training which direction they take.

That the happiness and well-being of mankind depend on the due supremacy of the moral over the sensual forces—of reason over the passions; and that early training, with a view to secure this, is of the first importance—the one thing more than all others necessary.

That, individually as well as collectively, man's well-being and happiness depend upon himself; and it is the duty of every one to do what he can, in the position in which he finds himself, to help on the world and make things better than they are.

That there is much evil and suffering in the world, some of which appears to be irremediable; but that nearly the whole is remediable, and that it is our business to search out the causes of so much as is remediable, and to apply the remedy.

That a future life is not required to supplement the present one, and so to make up for the imagined shortcomings of this world.

That, assuming this life to be succeeded by another, there is not any sufficient reason for thinking that what is fitted to qualify us to discharge well our duties in promoting the well-being of ourselves and our fellow-creatures in this life, is un-



fitted to 'prepare us for an hereafter: the same over-ruling Providence watching over both states of being.

That it is inconsistent with the notion of a wise and benevolent Deity to suppose that punishment should be inflicted in a future world as a means of suppressing crime in this world.

In my next letter I propose to inquire into the credibility of the Church's theory.

## LETTER III.

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MY DEAR ———,

Having in my two preceding letters called attention to the injurious influence which I conceive the Church to have had on the progress of the world and the happiness of mankind, and having stated in some detail my view of the Divine government, according to what I call the natural system, I now proceed to inquire into the truth and credibility of the dogmatic system of the Church, and to state the grounds on which I have arrived at the conclusion that that system cannot be founded in truth. I know it is said that argument is not the weapon by which religious errors are to be combated; that they will die out of themselves when human intelligence, gradually enlightened by the advances of science, has outgrown them, and not before. This I admit is in a great measure true; and this consideration may serve to allay the fears of those persons, yourself included, who, feeling the change to be inevitable—the transition, viz., from dogmatic faith to rational belief—yet dread that it should be brought about too precipitately. I do not share this fear: I have no apprehension of unveiling the truth \* too suddenly; and I feel sure that there must be many persons interested in inquiries of this nature

\* 'Fontenelle,' dit M. Garat très-ingénieusement, 'paraît voir dans la Vérité cette statue antique d'Isis couverte de plusieurs voiles; il croit que chaque siècle doit en lever un et soulever seulement un autre pour le siècle suivant.'

whose minds are now unsettled, and to whom it may afford some help to have placed before them in a connected form the argument as to the credibility of the Church system as it has presented itself to a mind which, though not professing or indeed being able to treat the subject exhaustively, has yet examined it with some care, and with every desire to arrive at the truth.

What is it that this system requires us to believe ?

The following is, I think, a fair summary of what is so required : That man was created innocent and endowed with immortality, but that our first parents having, when in Paradise, been guilty of disobeying the commands of God by eating the forbidden fruit, sin and death were thereby brought into the world, and man became utterly corrupt ; and that God, being angry, cursed the whole human race to the latest posterity, and resolved to destroy the world, but that Jesus, His only begotten Son, the second person of the Trinity, in order to appease the wrath of His Father, offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, by consenting to suffer a painful death on the cross in order that He might thus redeem the human race, or such of them as should entitle themselves to redemption by believing in Him. A covenant of grace was accordingly entered into between the Father and the Son, by virtue of which all who should believe in the Son and do the will of God should be redeemed, and be received into Heaven, there to enjoy eternal happiness ; but all who were not so redeemed should remain under condemnation and suffer everlasting punishment in Hell. The covenant of grace having been entered into, the second person of the Trinity, after the lapse of something more than 4,000 years (the world having remained during the interval under the curse with its awful consequences), submitted Himself to incarnation, and to be born of a virgin, impregnated in some

mysterious manner by the overshadowing of the third person of the Trinity, and accordingly appeared on the earth in the form of a Jewish child, and in due time, when grown to man's estate, having announced the glad tidings of salvation to all who should believe in Him, He suffered death on the cross. By this infinite sacrifice the infinite justice of God was satisfied, and in the result redemption was accomplished for all who should believe in the atonement, repent of their sins, and plead for forgiveness for Christ's sake.

It is not material, in the view which I take, to go into an examination of the various systems of doctrine that have been developed out of these few and simple, however awful, elements; or to inquire which of them is most in accordance with the scheme of redemption contained in the Canonical Scriptures; the Roman Catholic, the Greek, the Anglican, the Arminian, the Lutheran, the Calvinistic, the Independent, or the Wesleyan. Some of them are more objectionable than others: the Calvinistic especially, with its dogmas of eternal decrees, election, reprobation, predestination, and the like, is more revolting to good feeling and the sense of justice within us than the rest; but they all are incredible. They all assume that, after allowance made for all the human beings who by possibility may be able to avail themselves of the covenant of grace and obtain the offered redemption, countless millions are brought into the world who after enduring the portion of suffering which may be their lot in this life, are doomed, unavoidably and for no fault of their own, to an endless state of suffering in a life to come such as it is impossible for our limited imagination even to conceive. And this, all these systems hold to be the deliberate purpose of a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.\*

\* The Christian religion is generally assumed to be a mild and beneficent religion. Christians, however, never seem shocked at any amount of cruelty

This I find it impossible to believe. It offers, to my mind, no satisfactory solution of the mystery of the world, and it is in itself incredible. And no '*Continuity of Scripture*,' no Bampton or other lectures, no university professors of divinity, no preachers—orthodox or other—preaching every week from countless pulpits, can persuade me that it is other than utterly and radically false. Nothing but the conventional tone of reverence and mystery in which this strange scheme has been wrapped up and veiled, and to which we have been accustomed from our earliest years, could prevent our being shocked at the idea that it is possible that a just and benevolent Creator should have been its author.

The objection to this scheme, on the ground of its being inconsistent with the attributes of a benevolent Deity, is sometimes attempted to be met by a reference to the analogy of nature. It is, say the apologists, analogous to the moral government of God as it is exemplified in what we see going on around us in this world; the Bible presents no greater difficulties than the external world and its administration. But this

imputed to the God whom they worship. Savages we know have a natural propensity to cruelty, even to self-inflicted tortures; but among civilised nations we do not in general find cruelty viewed with satisfaction except in connection with what are deemed offences against religion. It would almost seem as if the clerical mind felt constrained, from a principle of loyalty to the Christian faith, to dwell with complacency on the torments which are prepared for the unbelieving and the wicked. Even so mild a Christian as Jeremy Taylor, in his *Contemplations on the State of Man* (cited in Lecky's *History of European Morals*, vol. ii. note 239), deliberately enumerates the most atrocious acts of cruelty in human history, and says that they are surpassed by the tortures inflicted by the Deity. Hobbes, who was not by his profession required to cherish such sentiments, found difficulty in believing the cruelty attributed to the Almighty. 'It seemeth hard,' he says, 'to say that God, who is the Father of Mercies, that doth in heaven and earth all that He will, that hath the hearts of men in His disposing, that worketh in men both to do and to will, and without whose free gift man hath neither inclination to good nor repentance of evil, should punish men's transgressions without any end of time and with all the extremity of torture that men can imagine, and more.'—*Leviathan*, p. 345.

is scarcely a legitimate argument. In resorting to the analogy of evil in this world in order to explain the greater evil which is objected against the proposed solution, it is forgotten that this is, by the supposition, a fallen world. In consequence of the Fall this world is full of evil (so the theory maintains), and it is in the future world that all is to be set right, and the ways of God to man justified. The apologists cannot, therefore, consistently with their own theory, justify the scheme of the future better world from analogy to this fallen world. Moreover, the supposed analogy can hardly be said to exist. Evil there is in this world it is true, but it is by no means the order of nature prescribed by God. On the contrary, nature (to speak figuratively) everywhere, as I have pointed out in my preceding letter, shows repugnance to evil, and, through her prime agent, man, is ever struggling against it; and, by man's activity and skill, is more and more overcoming the evil which still, alas! through man's ignorance or negligence, exists to a lamentable extent. It is sufficiently mysterious that there should be so much evil in the shape of suffering in the world as there is; but at least this suffering is finite, and to a great extent it is explicable and remediable. It affords no analogy for the supposition of an endless state of suffering irremediable by any efforts of ours, having no conceivable object, and being altogether irreconcilable with the notion of a just and benevolent Creator.

It is not difficult to account for the way in which the notion of a fall from a higher nature may have entered into people's minds. The struggle which we constantly feel within us between our aspirations after the good, and our propensity to evil, has suggested to the greatest intellects of modern time—Pascal and others—the notion of two natures: *deux âmes*, they have been called. We feel within us, it is said, the remains of our

former grandeur\* weighed down by the miseries resulting from the fall.†

There is, however, nothing mysterious in the struggle between our animal propensities, our self-love, our passions, which are necessary for our existence and progress in the world, on the one hand, and our moral and intellectual nature, by which we are enabled to control and regulate what may be called our animal nature, on the other. The more complete is our moral and intellectual training, the less the struggle will become, until at length it may be expected to become almost evanescent.

The system of religion miraculously revealed being, by the supposition, at variance with that revealed in the works of God, there is a constant struggle between the two. To escape from this the Church, wise in its generation, insists that revealed religion is a matter beyond the province of reason, and is to be conceived by faith only; and this faith it declares will be vouchsafed by a special inspiration of Divine grace to all who earnestly seek it by prayer. And as faith is thus supposed to lift its object out of the domain of reason, it is a great point with the Church to extol faith, and to represent it as an ennobling principle for which it is the duty of all good men to struggle with something of a loyal affection.

\* Trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.—WORDSWORTH.

† Dr. Middleton treated the story of the Fall as allegorical, and as intended to illustrate the great duty of obedience to God.

Bacon's view is not widely different from this :—' After his creation in the Divine image, man made (he says) a total defection from God, presuming to imagine that the commandments and prohibitions of God were not the rules of good and evil, but that good and evil had their own principles and beginnings, and lusted after the knowledge of those imagined beginnings; to the end to depend no more upon God's will revealed, but upon himself and his own light as a god, than which there could not be a sin more opposite to the whole law of God.'

Faith, thus understood, is something different from belief. It is rather an instinctive religious feeling supplying warmth, and vigour, and practical effect to the belief which has been arrived at from other sources. Correctly speaking faith is confidence in the truth of our convictions, religious or other, and a determination to abide by them. It is in its nature somewhat analogous to conscience, or sense of duty. The conscience, as I have contended in my previous letter, does not supply the standard of right and wrong; it merely requires us to do that which we believe to be right, but which has been ascertained to be so from other sources. So neither does faith supply a measure of the truth of what we believe: it merely gives sanction and life to the belief which has been arrived at from other sources, namely, from inquiry or authority; and in judging of the completeness of this inquiry or the sufficiency of this authority arises the necessity for an appeal to reason.\* In proof that the firmest faith is no conclusive evidence of the truth of our convictions, we cannot, perhaps, as remarked by the author of *The Jesus of History*,† address to Protestants a

\* Dryden, in those magnificent lines with which the *Religio Laici* opens, assigns to reason the office of leading up to faith, which being attained, it is to be superseded. Still it is for reason to guide us on the way to faith:—

Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars,  
To lonely weary wandering travellers,  
Is reason to the soul; and as on high  
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,  
Not light us here, so reason's glimmering ray,  
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,  
But guide us upward to a better day;  
And as those nightly tapers disappear  
When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere,  
So pale grows reason in religion's sight,  
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.

† Williams & Norgate. This very remarkable work was first published anonymously. The second edition is published with the name of the author, Sir Richard Hanson, Chief Justice of Australia, one of whose earlier works was referred to in my former letter. It is a history of the life of Jesus as it is to be



stronger argument than to point to the faith of Roman Catholics in the intercession of the Virgin. Myriads of votaries daily address their prayers to the Virgin, and have the most undoubting faith that she is listening to their prayers. Yet that which we consider the most enlightened class of Christians feel not less strongly that the whole is a delusion.

The Church cannot, therefore, escape from the necessity of appealing ultimately to our reason. For there is always the question of the sufficiency of the authority upon which we are to accept the dogma proposed as an object of faith: and we have no other means of settling that question than by an appeal to reason. The Church claims for the Scriptures an authority that is indisputable—a divine authority paramount to reason. The Scriptures, it alleges, are divinely inspired; they are the Word of God.

It may be admitted that where God has *unquestionably* spoken, reason is silenced. It is superseded by faith. We have an instance of this kind of faith in the case of Abraham (supposing that we accept the Scripture account as true). It was his privilege to ‘converse with God face to face.’ There could be no doubt, therefore, on the occasion of the great trial of his faith, that God had spoken. That is not our case. The question with us is whether God *has* spoken? and until that question is decided in the affirmative there is no case for an exercise of faith. Unless we can establish the inspiration of the Scriptures, we have nothing of an indisputable character to rest upon.

Can this be done? The Church has made the inspiration an article of faith. If we accept it as an article of faith, it must be on the authority of the Church that we accept it. But

collected from the sacred writings, viewed simply as ordinary historical records, very carefully compiled, and written in a spirit quite worthy of the high judicial character of its author.

whence is the authority of the Church derived? The Church derives its authority from the Scriptures, or, according to the Roman Catholic view, from the Scriptures and tradition which is matter of evidence. We cannot, therefore, accept the inspiration as an article of faith on its authority. It would be to argue in a circle.

If the inspiration cannot be sustained as an article of faith, it becomes a question of evidence merely. Treating it as a question of evidence, can the dogma possibly be sustained? As we shall presently see, the external evidence is little more than a vague tradition from an ignorant and uncritical age, adduced in support of the truth of a narrative coloured throughout by fanciful legends; and the internal evidence is of such a character as to make the supposition of its having been divinely inspired altogether incredible.

If it be assumed that there is merit in the act of faith as opposed to reason, then the more opposed to reason the higher the exercise of faith; and the oft-quoted *credo quia impossibile* becomes the highest expression of this order of merit; and we can hardly quarrel with Bacon's position, that 'the more absurd any Divine mystery is the more do we honour God by believing it.'

I am far from questioning the value of faith in the sense that I have explained: faith in great principles, in virtue, in the power of religion, in the ultimate prevalence of good over evil—a lofty feeling more or less strong in different minds, giving life and vigour to all our earnest convictions, cherishing our highest aspirations, animating our dearest hopes. Without faith of this character, nothing great was ever achieved in this world.\* This is a faith justified by all that we see passing

\* Aptly did the *Times* describe the construction of the Mont Cenis Tunnel as an 'immense effort of scientific *faith*, genius and patience.'

around us ; it is not at variance with reason. It has indeed no lasting power, and its fruits are never safe unless it flow from rational conviction.

What is the source from which this extraordinary view of the Deity and of His dealings with mankind is derived ?

We find it as a supposed Divine revelation contained in the Bible—a collection of ancient writings, said to be divinely inspired, relating to the early history of the Jews, a very credulous and otherwise singular people, believing themselves to have been selected from among the nations of the earth as the objects of God's especial care, and to be under His direct and immediate government. The book itself abounds in marvellous stories of God's early dealings with His chosen people, which were no doubt believed by the Jews (as the Greek Mythology was believed by the Greeks) and accepted as their traditional history, although with our greater knowledge and more enlarged experience of the Divine government of the world, we can look upon them in no other light than as being legendary traditions historically incredible.

The book opens with an account of the creation of the world in six days, utterly at variance with what astronomy teaches us of the structure of the universe, and with what geology teaches us of the history of our own portion of it, the earth. And the difficulty arising from this contradiction is not to be got over by the explanation, sometimes given, that it is a partial and imperfect account only of the creation, not intended to impart astronomical or geological truths. The account is not imperfect only, it is absolutely untrue ; and the fact that it is absolutely untrue makes it impossible for us to believe that its author was divinely inspired. Writers divinely inspired, though they might not see fit to impart astronomical or

geological truths, would, we may feel sure, have taken care to state nothing inconsistent with those truths.

Attempts are indeed made by our clerical instructors to reconcile the teachings of geology with the Mosaic account of the creation, by the suggestion that days do not mean days but geological periods, and the like; but they are quite unworthy of their authors as ministers of the God of Truth. There can be no reasonable doubt that the author of the Book of Genesis meant to give a real account of the creation of the world.

In this book we have accounts of God walking bodily as a finite Being in the Garden of Eden and conversing with Adam and Eve. He visits and converses with Abraham, and on the occasion of the building of the Tower of Babel, before proceeding to the dispersion of the builders, He deems it proper to go in person to see whether the accounts that have reached Him are true.

Then we have angels familiarly visiting the earth, and there were giants in those days, and men living to the age of many hundreds of years.\*

\* There is some curious speculation of the late Archbishop Whately, on the subject of the longevity of the early patriarchs, in a Latin pamphlet, published by him anonymously at Stuttgart in 1849, entitled *Tractatus tres*. (*Metzler*.) In the first of the three *Tracts*, the archbishop contends that the statements in the second and third chapter of Genesis as to Adam and Eve being naked and not ashamed are to be understood literally and not allegorically. Adam and Eve were in Paradise without sexual passion, and, eating of the tree of life, they would have lived on for ever. They, however, sinned (being, as we are, liable to sin) by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the effect of which was to awaken within them the sexual passion, and they became ashamed that they were naked, and made themselves coverings of fig-leaves.

This was the fall; after which Adam knew his wife.

As to the knowledge of good and evil that was to follow on the eating of the fruit, the archbishop supposes the *good* to have been the pleasures connected with the sexual passion; the *evil* the calamities to be produced by the operation of the principle of population as explained by Malthus. These evils would have been much aggravated had the race retained the power of living for ever. Adam and

The story of the Flood and Noah's Ark we find it quite impossible to believe, consistently with our meteorological and engineering knowledge: a *universal* deluge, and the building of the ark—a vessel, if the story of its contents be true, larger than one of our largest ships of war; the provisioning of it and getting together of the infinite variety of animals; many of them, according to one account, in numbers of seven males and seven females of each species; according to the other account (for there are two accounts of the ark, differing from one another) all of them in pairs only, accomplished by Noah and his family in a very limited period of time. The difficulty might of course be got over, as all difficulties may, by the supposition of a miracle, but this would not be in accordance with the Scripture, which clearly refers to natural means only.\*

Then the Jewish history is full of prodigies; the serpent moving erect and conversing with Eve; the ass of Balaam to which an angel appears, invisible to Balaam, and which is gifted with human speech; the story of Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt; Jonas swallowed by a whale (the throat, it is presumed,

Eve were no longer therefore to be allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of life and live for ever, because the principle of population made death a necessity.

The longevity of the early races he explains from the fact that the virtues of the fruit of the tree of life inherent in Adam and Eve endured through many generations before they were worn out.

The archbishop refers to the *Tractatus* in a letter to Mrs. Hill, published in his life, and the authorship is there acknowledged by the editor.—*Life*, ii. p. 285.

In conversation with Mr. Senior (p. 400) he adverts to the longevity theory. 'The nature of the tree of life has not,' he says, 'been well explained. I suspect that the use of the fruit completely repaired the waste of the body, and that it imparted to the constitution of our first parents a vigour which gradually wore out.'

\* There is a moral difficulty connected with the question of the Flood. Why, it may reasonably be asked, was a family preserved in order to perpetuate the fallen race? And if this family found such favour in the sight of God as that it was proper that they should be rescued from the general doom, why was the curse revived in their descendants?

being miraculously enlarged for the purpose), and living three days in its belly.

Of a higher order of the marvellous is the sun standing still above Gibeon,\* and the moon over the valley of Ascalon; the passage of the Red Sea by Moses and his host on dry land; the passage of the Jordan under Joshua, and the fall of the walls of Jericho at the sound of trumpets blown by the priests.\*

These are a few of the more remarkable stories interspersed in the early history of the Jews as recorded in the Bible. They would hardly be worthy of particular notice if treated merely as part of the legendary history of that singular people. In the earlier ages of the world, when the laws of nature were entirely unknown, and all was marvel and mystery, it is not surprising that they should have been generally believed; but when it is asserted that these stories were miraculously dictated by the

\* To the Jews, in their ignorance of astronomy, it may well have appeared an ordinary miracle, by no means incredible, that the sun should stand still a whole day above Gibeon in order to afford time to complete the victory of Joshua over the Amorites; but to the man of science of the present day it is quite otherwise. For the former, as Professor Tyndall says, 'the miracle probably consisted of the stoppage of a ball of fire less than a yard in diameter, whilst to the other it would be the stoppage of an orb fourteen hundred thousand times the earth in size. And even accepting the interpretation which instructed divines now put upon this text, that Joshua dealt with what was apparent merely, but that what really occurred was the suspension of the earth's rotation, I think a greater reserve in accepting the miracle, and a right to demand stronger evidence in support of it, will be conceded to a modern man of science than would have sufficed for an ancient Jew. (*Fragments of Science*, p. 446.)

The Professor makes a curious calculation of the amount of force that must have been exerted even upon the latter supposition in the performance of this miracle. 'The energy here involved,' he says, 'is equal to that of six trillions of horses working for the whole of the time employed by Joshua in the destruction of his foes. The amount of power thus expended would be sufficient to supply every individual of an army a thousand times the strength of that of Joshua with a thousand times the fighting power of each of Joshua's soldiers, not for the few hours necessary to the extinction of the Amorites, but for millions of years.' (*Ibid.* p. 447.)

The waste of power in accomplishing the object of the miracle is therefore something quite astounding.

God of Truth, and are literally true, a demand is made on our faith or our credulity with which it is impossible to comply. If these stories are true, modern science is utterly vain.

This, it will be observed, is not a question concerning spiritual truth, for judging of which I know it is contended by theologians that a special spiritual faculty is required. It is a question as to the historical truth of alleged facts narrated in the Bible, and for that purpose the logical and critical faculty only is required. The truth of facts of this nature is to be judged by the light of the intellect alone, and so judged one cannot but be surprised that the stories just referred to should be believed by any intelligent man of the present day.

Sentiments, too, and acts are attributed to the Deity utterly unworthy of a great and good Being: human sacrifices sanctioned; treachery, injustice, and cruelty of the most wholesale kind; the ruthless slaughter of men, women and children, old men, and infants at the breast, enjoined on the Israelites and otherwise sanctioned by Jehovah. It is in vain to resort to the shroud of mystery—to say that our faculties are limited, that we see but in part. Our faculties are such as God has given to us for our guidance, and which we are bound conscientiously to use for that purpose to the best of our ability. If we see but in part, we see the whole of the statements under consideration, and if those statements impute to the Deity approval of deceit, of treachery, of wanton cruelty, of human sacrifices even, we are bound to withdraw our confidence from the authors of such statements.\*

\* The story of Job presents a striking phase of the Jewish mind. God, at the instance of Satan, in order to prove Job and illustrate his high worth, visits him with great losses and afflictions in order to see whether, when he becomes poor and miserable, Job will still love and serve Him.

*First.* Robbers kill all the ploughmen and herdsmen.

*Second.* The lightning burns up the sheep and the shepherds.

for precepts and examples and impassioned utterances which, if read with intelligence, may influence the world for good to the end of time. The deep religious feeling which gave the Hebrew prophets \* such an ascendancy over the hearts of their people, and which breathes through the sacred writings, still holds, and will go on to hold, its sway over our hearts. But we need not assume that their inspiration has in it anything of a supernatural character, nor that the authors of the sacred writings have any just claim to be deemed infallible. The marks of human frailty which are everywhere to be met with in these writings, make it as certain as anything can be in this world, that the book in which they are contained did not proceed from the immediate inspiration of a Being omniscient and truthful. And if it be conceded that the religious sentiment of the Hebrews was of a higher and purer order than that of any other nation, it will hardly be contended that in this respect—in spiritual faculty—they excelled other nations more than did the Greeks in æsthetic faculty—in architecture, sculpture, and painting. Yet this immeasurable superiority of the Greeks over all other nations of antiquity in matters of art, is not, in the present day at least, referred to supernatural agency. Why should we suppose that the lofty devotional genius of the Hebrews is to be referred to something out of the ordinary course of nature? If you can explain, without any miracle, the genius of a Homer or a Phidias, of a Zoroaster, a Buddha, or a Confucius, why not also the genius of a Moses or an Isaiah?

Treated as a human composition, to be read with discrimination, the Bible is of inestimable value. There is much in it of the highest order of excellence; much that is in harmony

\* 'Those dead but sceptred sovereigns who rule  
Our spirits from their urns.'



would have been unsuitable to the race in the earlier stages of its education. Dr. Temple, in his inaugural sermon on entering on his diocese, as well as in his contribution to the *Essays and Reviews*, adopts the same idea.

But surely it is a departure from the ordinary and orthodox notion of a Divine revelation to treat it as a portion of the progressive education of mankind. In this sense all the great geniuses who in the order of God's providence appear from time to time on the stage of the world to enlighten the darkness and advance the intelligence of their age, may be considered prophets of a Divine revelation.\* But the revelation of orthodoxy is something more than this—it is assumed to transcend human reason, and is often opposed to it. Religion may indeed be regarded as part of the progressive education of the human race, and, being itself no exception to the general law of progress, its earlier systems may reasonably be looked upon but as the necessary steps of an imperfect development. It will in that view partake of the common imperfection of our nature : but in a supernatural Divine revelation we can conceive of no imperfection.

The intelligence and the morality of men vary from age to age ; as in the growth of the individual man, so in the growth of the world ; and the government both of men and of boys, i.e., the degree of external restraint to be imposed, must be adapted to their intelligence and degree of moral cultivation from time to time ; but Divine truth and morality are ever the same. It can hardly have been the practice of Dr. Temple, during his head-mastership of Rugby School, to sanction

\* 'A few days before his death Bobus Smith said to me, "Rogers, however we may doubt on some points, we have made up our minds on one—that Christ was sent into the world commissioned by the Almighty to instruct mankind." I replied, "Yes, of that I am perfectly convinced."—*Table Talk of Rogers*. No doubt in the same way Shakespeare was sent into the world to instruct and delight mankind.

cruelty, lying, and stealing, in the lower forms, as being suitable to the imperfect intelligence of little boys.

It is no doubt startling to think it possible that the system of revealed religion so universally received among European nations should be founded in error, and that it must give way before the advancing march of truth ; and yet things almost as incredible have taken place within recent memory. If we go back little more than two hundred years, the belief in witchcraft was as firm and as universal as the belief in any dogma of revealed religion. Chief Baron Hale, a man of great intelligence, learning, and piety, not only insisted on the reality of witchcraft on the authority of Scripture, but he caused two women to be hanged for that imaginary offence in 1665. At a later period Wesley asserted, not without some show of truth, that the giving up of witchcraft was in effect giving up the Bible. Giving up the infallibility of the Bible it certainly was. So of the kindred superstition of the possession by and the casting out of devils, for the truth of which the very highest authority in the New Testament is relied on. Its truth is still guaranteed by the Canons of the Church of England, which regulate the casting out of devils by the licence of the bishop. And yet, in spite of the express authority of Scripture recognised in the canons of the Church, the belief in witches and in demoniacal possession has gradually died away under the growing intelligence of modern times ;\* and in like manner the opinion is growing,

\* It seems that the doctrine of demoniacal possession is not yet finally abandoned. In a work of so much authority as *The Student's New Testament History* it is distinctly asserted, and recognised as subsidiary to the belief in a personal devil. 'One thing is quite clear (it states): that its reality cannot be denied or explained away without impugning the whole truth of the Gospels. For they most clearly assume the personal presence of evil spirits in the possessed man, overpowering his will and governing his actions. . . . We do not affect to explain the state itself.

and is already entertained by nearly all the more intellectual classes not holding office in the Church, that the historical statements in the Bible, whether relating to cosmogony, chronology, or natural history, which are at variance with the conclusions of modern science, must be founded in error; and that all acts and purposes and feelings attributed to the Deity which would shock the moral sentiments of good and intelligent men of the present day must be deemed incredible, and must be attributed to the ignorance of the age in which these books were written, and to the moral imperfection of the persons by whom conduct and sentiments unworthy of a great and good Being are imputed to the Deity.\*

The question is naturally asked, How is it that this theological system—which on the face of it is so incredible, and which the more it is examined the more does it appear to be at variance with the system of nature, and opposed to the progress and well-being of mankind in this world—is still so generally believed?

The main reason for a man's believing it is that he is born

. . . . It is enough that we can see in this condition a consequence of the doctrine of a usurped kingdom of evil in the world under a personal head, with many followers and ministers who exercise power over fallen men.' (pp. 199-200. Cited in the *Westminster Review*, January 1871, p. 40.)

\* The great pains taken by learned and able divines to reconcile the statements in the Bible with the teachings of science seem to amount to a concession on the part of these divines that in matters cognisable by science, science must be the ultimate authority. What Principal Shairp insists is that science shall suggest no other cause of the origin and upholding of the beautiful order of things with which we are encompassed than the will and thought of God. 'This granted,' he says, 'religion must leave it to science to discover what is the method which the Divine thought has followed, what have been the processes by which it has evolved the order we now behold. All facts really established by science religion must receive; nay more, ought to welcome and incorporate into its own view of the universe, allowing them to modify that view as far as this may be necessary. In refusing to do this, in looking with suspicion, if not with positive hostility, on the fresh discoveries of each age, religious persons, since the days of Galileo downwards, have often erred, and given just grounds for complaint to the advocates of science.'—*Religion and Culture*, p. 115.

into the faith. He imbibes it with his mother's milk. Why do people almost invariably embrace the religious belief of the country in which they are born and brought up, whatever it be—Christian, Mahometan, Brahman, Buddhist? Why do the great majority of Christians believe in the efficacy of prayer addressed to the Virgin? It is not that the doctrine is true, or, if examined, even probable, but they have been bred in it.

By education most have been misled  
 So they believe because they so were bred.  
 The priest continues what the nurse began,  
 And so the child imposes on the man.—DRYDEN.

Why do the Jews of the present day go on to believe in Jehovah, and that He will yet redeem His chosen people, and restore to them their long-lost kingdom?

The force of habit in the perpetuation of erroneous opinions is very remarkable. We naturally cling to the errors of our infancy long after having admitted all the truths necessary for their eradication. It is painful to give up any belief early impressed upon us, even after the intellect is perfectly satisfied of its falsity. Experience shows that in many men great intelligence, in what respects the ordinary affairs of life, and great probity may be combined with so much prejudice in matters of religion as quite to obscure their judgment, and render their opinion of no value in questions of the latter kind.\* The best and most learned men, not less than the most ignorant, have

\* Hume, in his *History of England*, calls attention to this strange contrariety in the case of the great Parliamentary leader Vane in the time of the Commonwealth:—

'This man, so celebrated for his Parliamentary talents and for his capacity in business, has left some writings behind him; they treat, all of them, of religious subjects, and are absolutely unintelligible; no traces of eloquence, or even of common sense, appear in them. A strange paradox! did we not know that men of the greatest genius, where they relinquish by principle the use of their reason, are only enabled, by their vigour of mind, to work themselves the deeper into error and absurdity.' (viii. 462.)

been ready to attest by their death their belief in things of the truth of which they can have no certainty. Witness Lord-Chancellor More, who was ready to die for his belief in the Roman Catholic doctrine.

We readily believe what our fathers have believed; what from our earliest youth we have been in the habit of hearing spoken of with veneration, and as not to be called in question without sin. The doctrine that disbelief, or even doubt, is sinful is inculcated with our earliest education. And having been impressed with the notion that difficulties in the way of believing are but trials of our faith, it is no wonder if we feel a certain kind of merit in shutting up the avenues to doubt, and clinging with something higher than loyalty to the faith in which we have been brought up.

As Mr. Lecky observes in the work already cited: ‘Unfaltering belief being taught as the first of duties, and all doubt being usually stigmatised as criminal or damnable, a state of mind is formed to which we find no parallel in other fields. Many men, and most women, though completely ignorant of the very rudiments of biblical criticism, historical research, or scientific discoveries, though they have never read a single page, or understood a single proposition, of the writings of those whom they condemn, and have absolutely no rational knowledge either of the arguments by which their faith is defended, or of those by which it has been impugned, will nevertheless adjudicate with the utmost confidence upon every polemical question; denounce, hate, pity or pray for the conversion of all who dissent from what they have been taught; assume as a matter beyond the faintest possibility of doubt that the opinions they have received without inquiry must be true, and that the opinions which others have arrived at by inquiry must be false; and make it a main object of their lives to assail what they

call heresy in every way in their power, except by examining the grounds on which it rests. . . . Innumerable pulpits support this tone of thought.' (*History of Morals*, ii. 377.) The real difficulty is how to approach the minds of persons who, as matter of religious duty, abstain from reading whatever is calculated to disturb their present convictions, and who deem it a mark of Christian humility to yield a blind obedience to their spiritual guides, and an act of commendable self-denial to renounce the exercise of reason in matters of faith.

The facility with which the miraculous character of the Christian religion at the outset was admitted will not surprise us, if we bear in mind the disposition of men at the time of its introduction to believe anything that was propounded; the want of the checks upon error which the Press now affords, and the complete absence of the habit of cautious experimental research which Bacon and his followers infused into modern philosophy. We have a signal example, in the history of the *Mormons*, of the readiness with which, even in the present age, ignorant people embrace a new religion, however devoid of truth or probability. According to the history of this new class of religionists given by Lord Amberley in the November and December numbers of the *Fortnightly Review*, 1869, and apparently compiled with great care, the evidence upon which the Book of Mormon chiefly rests is the declaration of the three secretaries, Cowdery, Whetmer, and Harris, who, in company with Joe Smith, the founder of the faith, testify that they saw an angel descend from heaven and exhibit the plates upon which the book was written by the hand of Mormon before their eyes, so that they could see them and the engravings upon them distinctly; and further that the voice of the Lord then declared to them that they had been translated correctly. The four persons,

it is said, could not themselves be deceived, while their character and circumstances were such that we cannot suppose them to have combined to deceive mankind. 'The fate of this book,' Lord Amberley observes, 'its modern origin clearly exposed, the imposition made plain to every educated mind, yet steadily progressing, winning its way in America, in England, and even Asia, should impress us with the conviction how easy a thing it is for pretensions utterly unsupported by evidence or reason to gain admission among the uncritical multitude.'

In accounting for the very general belief which still prevails, we must not overlook the pains constantly taken to keep it alive; the countless sermons that are preached, and the books that are published, many of them by able and learned men; and although as arguments in favour of the credibility of the system they are of little absolute value, they have a very considerable effect in accomplishing the end proposed, viz., that of satisfying their hearers and readers. Books of this kind, and sermons, considering the circumstances under which they are written or preached, hardly can have any value as arguments in support of the truth of the system advocated by them. The writers and preachers themselves, for the most part, are probably sincere believers in its truth. They believe also that it is of the highest moment that this truth should be sustained and made manifest, and they write and preach, not with any view of inquiring into the truth, but for the purpose of vindicating the existing belief. They write with a foregone conclusion which they are to confirm and illustrate, but by no means to call in question. They are committed to this duty in accepting the office of a clergyman.

The task of defending the established opinions which our clergy undertake is not a difficult one. They preach or they write for a class who are in general only too willing to have

their doubts, if they have any, removed, and who are prepared to accept with little hesitation whatever assertions are made by their appointed teachers and guides. It is astonishing how small a part logic plays in the matter, and how ready men are to be put off with answers to inquiries which are no answers at all. To many of the objections of the sceptics, who, though ready to rush into print, are often not well qualified for the task they undertake, a plausible answer can be given. With regard to others it may be suggested, that if we knew more of the circumstances under which the narratives were written, there would doubtless be an answer. Where the objection seems unanswerable there is the expedient of silence; or it may be confidently disposed of as belonging to the class of objections which have already been answered again and again.\*

How often has Hume's unanswerable argument against the credibility of miracles been answered in this professional way. And the miracles are believed with additional confidence by those for whose use the answers are intended; and they will go on to be believed, until gradually, with the progress of science, and the growing intelligence of the times, the belief in the invariability of the laws by which the universe is governed becomes general, and then miracles will cease to be believed even by the ignorant.† As Professor Tyndall has re-

\* Bishop Wilberforce, who is well skilled in the use of the weapons of controversy, in his Charge on the subject of Bishop Colenso's writings, says: 'In all essential points they are but repetitions of old and often answered cavils against the Word of God.'

† The Duke of Argyll, in his delightful book, the *Reign of Law*, a work full of interesting information, and in its philosophy well adapted to the dawning liberality of the age, suggests an ingenious mode of getting over the difficulty of believing in miracles without its being necessary to believe that the laws of nature have been violated.

For the working of miracles he thinks super-natural power is not wanted; only super-human power. He argues that as the human mind controls the powers of nature so as to make them subservient to the uses of man, so the Divine mind, with



marked in one of his *Fragments of Science*, 'science keeps down the weed of superstition, not by logic, but by slowly rendering the soil unfit for its cultivation.'

The various Churches into which Christianity is divided, the Eastern, the Western, the Roman Catholic, with its Molinists and Jansenists,\* the Anglican, with its various classes of Non-conformists, Independents, Congregationalists, Baptists, particular and general, Methodists, and others, can hardly be expected to go deeply into questions the agitation of which might undermine the religious foundations on which they all rest. They are so busy with their own concerns, and with proving each other to be in the wrong, each believing itself to be in exclusive possession of the truth, that it does not occur to them that possibly they may all be in the wrong. They do not look at the real difficulties of the case. As Montaigne says, they do not dig to the root where the faults and defects lie: they only debate upon the branches. They do not examine whether such and such a thing be true, but whether it has been so and so understood.†

its more intimate knowledge of the powers of nature, may control them so as to produce what we in our ignorance think a *violation* of the laws of nature. God works the miracle by the selection and use of laws of which man knows and can know nothing, and which, if he did know, he could not employ. (pp. 14-15.)

But still there must be a *special* interference—something must take place that would not have taken place in the ordinary course of nature—a *deviation from the order of nature as known to us*—without which, as Canon Mozley says, the miracle is of no value evidentially. It is to believe this that is all the difficulty.

The Duke's way of getting over the difficulty reminds one of the ingenuity of the French princess, who having heard that the poor Parisians were starving from the want of bread, suggested that they should eat buns.

\* 'Gordon fit en peu de mots l'histoire et du Jansénisme et du Molinisme, et des persécutions dont un parti accablait l'autre et de l'opiniâtreté de tous les deux. L'Ingénu en fit la critique et plaignit les hommes qui, non contents de tant de discordes que leurs intérêts allument, se font de nouveaux maux pour des intérêts chimériques et pour des absurdités inintelligibles.'—*L'Ingénu*.

† 'Ce qui fait qu'on ne doute de guère de choses, c'est que les communes

One may safely predict of the forthcoming *Commentary*, about which Speaker Denison has taken so warm an interest, the joint performance of many of our Church luminaries, and which is to present a compendious answer to all possible Scripture difficulties, that it will contain a great deal of learned and ingenious disquisition which will give much satisfaction to a large number of persons, but that it will not go to the root of the matter.

It must not be supposed that the zealous lay defenders of the established religion have always been actuated by a belief in the truth or Divine authority of its doctrines. They have more probably been influenced by a vague feeling that the Church is a necessary institution, the mainstay of the governing powers, and essential for controlling the people. As Macaulay has remarked, speaking of the Tories of the seventeenth century, and their zealous defence of the Church: 'Few among them could have given any reason drawn from Scripture or ecclesiastical history for adhering to her doctrines, her ritual, or her polity.'

In our own times it was said, jokingly but truly, of the late Lord Chancellor Eldon, whose zeal for the interests of the Church was undoubted, when some one had called him a *pillar* of the Church, that he ought rather to have been called a *buttress*, as he was not often seen in the inside. Wordsworth, as Mr. Crabbe Robinson mentions in his entertaining *Diary* (vol. i. 389), had on some occasion 'defended earnestly the Church establishment. He even said he would shed his blood for it. Nor was he disconcerted by a laugh raised against him on account of his having before confessed that he knew not when he had been in a church in his own country.'\*

impressions on ne les essaye jamais ; on n'en sonde point le pied où gît la faute et la faiblesse ; on ne débat que sur les branches : on ne demande pas si cela est vrai, mais s'il a été ainsi ou ainsi entendu.' (105, folio 1635.)

\* Wordsworth's Churchism, though professed with some emphasis, was of a

The circumstances under which Christianity was introduced into the world are involved in so much obscurity that it is vain to hope that we shall ever arrive at the truth respecting them. The only original books that profess to give a detailed account of the life of Jesus and the introduction of Christianity are obviously not historically true.\* That there were many circumstances favourable to its introduction and spread we know. It was in the fulness of time, and when the world was prepared for such a doctrine, that Christianity was first preached. Everywhere the pagan faith had been shaken,† ‘We may doubt,’ says the author of *The Jesus of History*, already cited, ‘whether there has been any other period in the world’s history when the establishment of Christianity would have been possible. There

very vague character. His definition of a good Churchman, according to Mr. Crabbe Robinson, who knew him intimately, was ‘one who respects the institutions of his country, lives in conformity with their precepts, and does not trouble other people about their opinions.’—H. C. Robinson’s *Diary*, iii. 50.

Wordsworth’s real opinions are to be sought in his poetry. In his reflections among the ruins of Tintern Abbey we have a glimpse of his feeling of the Divine nature, when, speaking of passing from the period of ‘thoughtless youth’ to a maturer age, he says—

‘I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.’

This has hardly the true orthodox ring.

\* See this question examined with much industry and critical power in a work published by Mr. Scott, of Ramsgate, entitled *The English Life of Jesus*.

† ‘La superstition (says M. Rivarol), débordée sur la terre, demandait une main qui lui creusât un lit et lui donnât un cours régulier. Le Christianisme vint et parla aux sens, à l’esprit, au cœur. En retenant la pompe du paganisme, la subtile métaphysique des Grecs et toute la pureté du Stoïcisme, cette religion se trouva parfaitement appropriée à la nature humaine. C’est elle qui a consacré le berceau de toutes les monarchies de l’Europe.’—*Lettres à M. Necker*, p. 123.

have, it is true, been many subsequent ages in which the sufferings of mankind have led them to turn with renewed interest to the picture of Christ, the Redeemer and Consoler: and perhaps these ages would have allowed the diffusion of the Christian faith if then preached for the first time. But it was needful for the foundation of Christianity that the Jewish religion and nationality should still subsist at Jerusalem, and even that they should continue to exist for a sufficient time to allow the new faith to assume shape and consistency under their shelter, and to permit the definite organisation of the Church. If Jesus had appeared at any other time, even so few years earlier as during the time of the Great Herod, or so few years later as during the siege of Jerusalem, the establishment of Christianity would have been impossible.' (p. 387.)

One circumstance favourable to the propagation of the new doctrine was the practice, then very prevalent among the Sophists and Rhetoricians, of holding public discourse in the theatres and market-places. 'On accourait,' says M. Martha, in his interesting work *Les Moralistes sous l'Empire romain*, 'pour entendre un sophiste, et on était converti par un apôtre.'

We have in Wesley and Whitefield examples of what may be done by earnest enthusiastic men in influencing the character of large bodies of men sunk in ignorance and vice, and we need not, therefore, wonder at the effect produced by the preaching of Jesus and of St. Paul, certainly not less earnest nor less eloquent. The New Gospel was especially preached to the poor and wretched of every degree. To them was promised an almost immediate entrance into the new Kingdom, where the weary should be at rest, where suffering should be unknown, and they would enjoy happiness evermore. The fact that the new faith was embraced with enthusiasm by the early converts, proves not the truth of the alleged facts but rather the attraction of the creed.

The effect of Whitefield's preaching on the illiterate colliers of Kingswood, near Bristol, is very much what we may imagine to have been the effect of the early preaching of the apostles ; but the apostles had the great advantage arising from the belief then prevailing of the early coming of Christ's Kingdom.

There seems to be a considerable resemblance between the religious practices of the early Wesleyan Methodists and what, from such glimpses as we have, we may gather to have been those of the early Christians. Their class-leaders were to see every member of their several divisions at stated periods, in order to inquire how it was with their souls—to advise, reprove, comfort, and exhort, and to receive contributions for the expenses of the service and the relief of the poor. And these stated meetings and this examination of one another could not but have a very powerful influence in strengthening their faith and confirming their good resolves.

The paroxysms of nervous emotion with which the hearers of Wesley were sometimes seized at their prayer meetings, often ending in convulsions, when, as Wesley expresses it, 'the power of God came mightily upon them,' we do not now look upon as an extraordinary visitation of God, as no doubt Wesley and his followers did when they threw themselves on their knees round the convulsionist, and 'ceased not calling upon God till He raised them up full of the peace and joy of the Holy Ghost.'

From the time of John the Baptist downwards, and probably at an earlier period, though the history has not come down to us, holy men of fervid temperament, under the influence of strong religious convictions, have had a like power of working on their fellow-men—a power which they have not always exercised so honestly as did Wesley and Whitefield. It may be true, as stated by Wesley, that these violent manifestations of religious emotion were in many cases followed by

undeniable reformation of life, and that this is proof of the genuineness and sincerity of the emotion ; but it is no proof that the feelings experienced were anything more than the *natural* result of Wesley's influence on excitable natures.

But it is contended by the professors of Christianity that there is something special and exceptional in the so-called Divine influence by which the Hebrew prophets were inspired, and by which, at a later period, Jesus was impelled and guided in the mission undertaken by Him. Mr. Seebohm, in a remarkable paper in the *Fortnightly Review* for February 1868, 'On the Christian Hypothesis and the Method of its Verification,' an hypothesis which he professes himself ready to give up, unless, as he firmly believes, it admits of scientific verification, thus states the argument for the internal evidence of the Divine influence referred to :—

'From the days of Abraham till now,' he says, 'there have always been men who have believed themselves to have been subjects of *some influence*, whatever it be, which they have followed, believing it to be the influence of a Divine Spirit. That influence, whatever it be, centred in the person of Christ. *He* said He came to bear witness to *Him* from whence *it* came, that He came from *Him* ; that the worship of the "unseen God," instead of being confined, as formerly, to the descendants of Abraham, was thenceforth to spread among the Gentiles also. And the fact is it *did* spread from that moment, so that from that time to this the Christian religion has been the one powerful living religion of the civilised world. Thousands of Christians meanwhile, from that time to this, have believed that they have been recipients of this same spiritual influence ; that it has changed their hearts ; that in following it some of them have at times been led in a very remarkable way, which to themselves and others around them seemed superhuman ; that

their prayers have in like manner apparently been answered, sometimes in a way which they believed could not be the result of mere coincidence or chance. They may or may not have been mistaken, but the facts remain.'

No doubt the facts remain, such as they are. Persons have felt and thoroughly believed themselves to be under this kind of influence, and under such influence have been capable of exertions and sacrifices which in its absence would have been impossible. But the fact that they felt that they were acting under the influence of a Divine Spirit affords no sufficient ground for our believing that they had therefore a greater insight into the purposes of the Creator than others. The truth of such convictions, as of all other impulses and feelings, is to be tested by reason and by observation of their effects and tendencies on the happiness of mankind. It has been under the leadership of persons feeling themselves so influenced, and by means of the enthusiasm which they have been able to create among their followers, that all great changes in the moral and religious world have from time to time been brought about; the introduction and spread of Christianity among the rest. Under a like influence, and by the creation of a like enthusiasm among their followers, the founders of Buddhism, Mahometanism, and the five or six other forms of religion that have obtained a permanent footing in the world, have succeeded in their missions; and among these Mormonism should not be forgotten—perhaps, considering the period of its introduction, not the least wonderful of them all.

With regard to miracles, many persons, though adhering to their belief in Christianity, have ceased to attach importance to them as proofs of the supernatural character or the Divine authority of the Christian religion. Miracles were deemed to be

of common occurrence at the time of the introduction of Christianity, and among the Jews especially no one thought of questioning their truth. If miracles had not been found recorded among the incidents attending its introduction, their absence would have afforded strong ground for doubting the genuineness of the histories. 'In its moral aspect,' as Mr. Lecky observes, 'Christianity was broadly distinguished from the systems around it; but its miracles were accepted by both friend and foe as the ordinary accompaniments of religious teaching. . . . Without a single exception, the Fathers maintained the reality of the pagan miracles as fully as their own.'—*History of Morals*, i. 397. They were in fact a part of the religious system of the Jews. The sacred writers, both of the Old and New Testament, inform us that God permits evil spirits to perform miracles through the medium of magicians and false prophets. Now, with the more intelligent defenders of Christianity the miracles are themselves a difficulty, and instead of proving the Divine institution of Christianity, they can themselves only be rendered credible by the internal evidence of the truth of Christianity. The late Dr. Arnold, in one of his published letters, says: 'It is only through our belief in the Gospel that we accord our belief to them.' (Cited in the *Edinburgh Review*, October 1837, p. 411.)

Two great miracles lie at the foundation of orthodox Christianity — the miraculous conception and the resurrection. Viewed historically, the evidence cannot be considered satisfactory as to either of them. Indeed it is such evidence as, if adduced in favour of any modern occurrence supposed to be miraculous, we should hardly think it worth while to investigate.

Apart from the supposition of the plenary inspiration of the New Testament history, nothing can be slighter than the



evidence which has come down to us of the miraculous conception of Jesus. During the first thirty years of His life it does not appear that He passed for more than an ordinary human being. Having become famous, and His history coming to be written after another interval of more than thirty years, His biographer, Matthew (of whom, by the way, we know little or nothing), as is usual in the case of remarkable persons whose history has to be compiled a considerable time after their death, tells a remarkable story of His birth.\* His mother, it is said, being betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter of mature age, proved to be prematurely with child; whereupon Joseph, in tenderness to her reputation, was about to put her away privately, when an angel appeared to him in a dream, and bade him not fear to take her as his wife, for that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, and Joseph thereupon married her. At the period when Matthew wrote, dreams were supposed, especially among the Jews, to have something of a supernatural character, and Matthew would naturally think that there could be no better evidence of the Divine origin of the subject of his biography than a dream. Now we understand the nature of dreams better, and therefore, even supposing that Joseph communicated to Matthew this story of the dream, which is highly improbable, since Matthew wrote more than half a century after the event; or, supposing Matthew to have been otherwise credibly informed of the fact of the dream, we should, with our knowledge, attach no weight to the communication. What adds to the improbability of the story is that Mary did not at once, on becoming conscious that she was miraculously pregnant, communicate the fact to Joseph.

Then, with regard to the other great miracle—the resurrection

\* It is remarkable that a story in all points similar is told of the birth of Plato, upon evidence (objectively considered) at least as good.

of Jesus—the historical evidence is of a very contradictory and flimsy character. Even supposing the various statements of the events connected with the resurrection to be generally credible—so far, that is, as contradictory statements, and statements written so long after the events can be supposed to be credible, however honest the witnesses—the fact of the resurrection is left in great obscurity.

First, it is not quite certain that death actually took place on the cross. Taking the accounts of Mark and John together, there is nothing to show that Jesus was more than two hours on the cross; a shorter period than is understood to be generally required to produce death by crucifixion. The two malefactors crucified with Jesus were not, it will be remembered, dead when the soldiers came to take them from the cross.

Pilate appears to have disapproved of the crucifixion of Jesus, and to have ordered it unwillingly. It is not improbable, therefore, that he would be induced to proceed with as much indulgence towards Him and His friends as he could venture to do. The soldiers did not break the legs of Jesus as they did those of the malefactors. They were satisfied that He was dead, and this, notwithstanding that blood and water came from the wound made in His side; and the body was given over to a disciple (Joseph of Arimathea), who conveyed it to a private tomb of his own. The fact of His death is not therefore clearly made out.

But suppose the fact established that Jesus died on the cross, the fact of His resurrection in the body is not clear. Scarcely any of the persons to whom He was said to appear were able to recognise Him. The disciples at Emmaus rather inferred his identity from His manner of breaking bread than were certain of the fact. Then it appears that He was able to pass through walls and closed doors, as ghosts

are supposed to do, and as we may perhaps assume that the saints did who, on the occasion of the crucifixion, are said to have come out of their tombs, and to have gone into the holy city, and to have appeared unto many; though there it is said that the bodies arose (*τὰ σώματα*).

Happily, the question is not of any great moment, because, supposing the fact of the resurrection of Jesus to be clearly established, it would, being the resurrection of a supernatural and Divine person,\* afford no conclusive argument in favour of the resurrection of human beings born in the ordinary course of nature. Moreover, the notion of a resurrection of *the body* is now almost universally given up by intelligent believers in Christianity, and the miracle therefore proves too much. How, indeed, can it be conceived to be possible that the body which has been laid in the earth, and has decayed and dissolved into its elements—which it must do in a few thousand years, embalm it as you may—should rise again. It is true that with the habitual insincerity which characterises all our religious profession, we go on repeating every week our belief in the resurrection of the body, but we do not believe it in the ordinary sense of the word any more than we believe that Jesus descended into hell.† St. Paul says it is a spiritual body that is raised; but this is not the sense in which the word is used and commonly

\* It is remarkable that the Jesus of the New Testament is not the Messiah of the Old Testament. The Messianic idea of the Hebrew Scriptures was that He should be a man born of man but selected by God for the office on account of His eminent virtues. See what is said on this head in the late Dean Alford's *New Testament for Lay Readers*, vol. i. part i. p. 118.

† The Articles of religion, it is true, sanction the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in so far as the resurrection of Jesus is to be considered as the prototype of the resurrection of man. The 4th Article states emphatically that 'Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, *wherewith He ascended into Heaven and there sitteth* until He return to judge all men at the last day.'

But this rather tends to show the obsolete character of the Articles than to prove the truth of the doctrine.

understood in the Creed. It is not very clear what St. Paul means by a spiritual body, which seems, indeed, a contradiction in terms, and the difficulty is increased by the analogy of the seed used by St. Paul in his argument on the resurrection; for the seed is raised in its natural body. The argument of St. Paul is not perhaps entitled to much weight, as the analogy on which he relies is founded in error. St. Paul seems to have thought that the seed did not quicken unless it died. We now know that if the seed die, it does *not* quicken. There is, in fact, no analogy between the rising again of a dead animal body, and the natural continuation of the species in the growth of a seed.\*

Thus far the argument as to the credibility of these two great miracles proceeds on the supposition that the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures cannot be maintained, as I have contended in an earlier part of this letter. But this the dignitaries of our Church are not yet prepared to admit. The late Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Lee, e.g., rested all his hopes of an hereafter on the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. In his somewhat bitter censure of Bishop Colenso, he declared that 'the very basis of our hopes, the very nearest and dearest of our consolations, are taken from us when one line of the sacred volume is said to be unfaithful.' Again, in his *Discourses on the Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, the Bishop says: 'It will be my object in the present discourses to establish

\* St. Paul seems to have thought it a legitimate argument in favour of the resurrection, that if the dead did not rise he and his followers were of all men most miserable. It may be that St. Paul and his followers made a mistake if the dead rise not, but it is hardly a legitimate argument in favour of the resurrection. The same argument may be used by Simon Stilites, Honorius, and other self-devoted enthusiasts as well as by St. Paul. It may be true also that they have made a mistake even if the dead do rise. It is possible that they should be called to account for opportunities wasted of doing good to their fellow-creatures and themselves in this life.

. . . . the infallible certainty, the indisputable authority, the perfect and entire truthfulness, of all and every the parts of Holy Scripture.' (p. 19.) And unreasonable and untenable as the doctrine seems to be to the lay mind, there is something to be said for the earnestness at least of those who refuse to give up the claim to inspiration for every line of Scripture. They reasonably feel that if they give up a single particle of the inspired writings on the ground that it is contradictory to our reason, they know not where they can stop. They may have soon to abandon some of the most vital points of the Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, the opinion is daily gaining ground among the firmest believers in Christianity, that the great dogma of the inspiration of the Scriptures must soon be abandoned by the Church. Dr. Arnold, more than twenty years ago, declared this to be inevitable.\*

Indeed, if the matter be dispassionately considered, it is surprising that the dogma has held its ground so long. As I have urged above, statements contradictory one of another; views of the creation at variance with the soundest conclusions of modern science; statements historically false; moral sentiments attributed to the Deity, shocking to our best feelings, could hardly have been found in writings dictated by the Spirit of all truth. If the pretended inspiration do not guard against error in geology, astronomy, and history, why in anything else? If we find it wrong in things that we understand,

\* See his letter to Mr. Justice Coleridge, cited in the *Edinburgh Review* for October, 1847, p. 417: 'Have you seen your uncle's letters on inspiration? which I believe are to be published. They are well fitted to break ground in the approaches to that momentous question which involves in it so great a shock to existing notions—the greatest probably that has been given since the discovery of the falsehood of the doctrine of the Pope's infallibility. Yet it must come; and it will end, in spite of the fears and clamours of the weak and bigoted, in the higher exalting and more sure establishing of Christian truth.'

why should we assume that it is right in things said to be above our comprehension?

It is not material to my purpose to go into any detailed examination of the discrepancies among the writers of the New Testament; they are chiefly of importance as showing conclusively that the authors of the conflicting statements cannot have been miraculously inspired with the truth.

Not only are there irreconcilable discrepancies between the first and second of the Synoptic gospels, especially in the accounts of the parentage, birth, and infancy of Jesus; but in the fourth gospel (that attributed to St. John) there is altogether a different tone from that of the others—a tone characterised by mystery and strongly tinged with Platonisms; and views are propounded of the character and ministry of Jesus widely differing from those exhibited in the Synoptics. It is difficult to believe that accounts so much at variance with each other can both be true. At the time when the fourth gospel was composed all prospect of the speedy return of Jesus in the flesh had vanished, and the material view of the object of Christ's coming had given place to a spiritual one. A very considerable doctrinal development had obviously taken place among the founders of Christianity in the long interval between the publication of this gospel and the three preceding ones.

As pointed out by a writer in the *National Review* for November 1863: 'A gospel in which Jesus never meets a demoniac, and never utters a parable, is neither baptized nor tempted, partakes of no last passover, and institutes no last supper, announces no coming of the kingdom of heaven, no fall of Jerusalem, and no return of Messiah to judgment, speaks of himself as "the Son of God," and as carrying a pre-existent glory in disguise, and finally is crucified in coincidence with the

slaying of the paschal lamb, belongs to quite a different world from its predecessors, and could never proceed from the same little group of personal disciples whose memorials we meet with in the other Evangelists.' (p. 529.)\*

The fourth gospel can hardly be considered as historical. It is rather a philosophy of Christianity, written obviously at a much later period than the other Gospels, and after a new character had been given to the doctrines of Jesus, by the preaching and the writings of St. Paul—the author a person of extraordinary genius and thoroughly imbued with the learning and philosophy of the Alexandrine school, Hebraistic, Platonic and Pauline.

With regard to the teaching of Jesus, there is no doubt much that is truly excellent, much that is noble and great, both in His precepts and His example, and He may truly be called, if not *the* Light of the world, one of the great lights; the highest ideal of moral and spiritual excellence that has yet appeared, and perhaps the greatest benefactor of the human race that the world has seen; but there does not appear to be anything of a supernatural character in the religious or moral principles or doctrines propounded either by Jesus or His disciples, or which suggests the notion of a moral or intellectual miracle. With regard to the great question of a future existence, it cannot be said that he removed any of the difficulties previously

\* 'One argument,' says Mr. Greg, 'against the supposition of John having been the author of the fourth gospel, has impressed my mind very forcibly. It is this: that several of the most remarkable events recorded by the other evangelists, at which we are told by them that only *Peter, James, and John were present*, and of which, therefore, John alone of all the evangelists could have spoken with the distinctness and authority of an eye-witness, are entirely omitted—we may say *ignored*—by him. Such are the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration, the agony in Gethsemane . . . . *All the events said to have been witnessed by John alone are omitted by John alone!* This fact is fatal either to the reality of the events in question or to the genuineness of the fourth gospel.'—*Creed of Christendom*, p. 87.

existing. The local Heaven which He preached as the dwelling-place of the Creator, and into which He was said to ascend bodily after His resurrection, is no longer deemed credible by educated men; and the immediate coming of the kingdom of God, which He announced with great particularity,\* we know did not take place. He seems therefore to have left the question involved in the same uncertainty as before His mission. Moreover the mixture of error and imperfection in the teaching of Jesus, some instances of which I shall presently advert to, shows that it could not have been supernaturally inspired.

It was rather by the motives which He supplied, and the example which He gave of a holy and virtuous life, than by the doctrine He inculcated, that Jesus succeeded in effecting the great moral regeneration for which the world is for ever indebted to Him. 'The simple record,' as Mr. Lecky says, 'of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of the philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has, indeed, been the wellspring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life.' (p. 9.) And this will remain. 'Come what may,' says Mr. Martineau, 'of the possibility of critical verification, the Divine image furnished by the life of Christ is now secured to the soul of Christendom, presides in secret over its moral estimates, directs its aspirations, and inspires its worship.'†

\* Nothing can be more express and clear on this point than the words of Jesus, and the language of the writers of the New Testament. See Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32; John v. 25; 1 Cor. x. 11., xv. 51, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18; James v. 8; 1 Peter ix. 7; 1 John ii. 18.

† Our orthodox theologians seem hardly sufficiently to consider how much they detract from the value of the example of Jesus by insisting on His supernatural character of a Divine Person. As Mr. Greg says, in the work cited in a preceding note:—

'If Christ were a man He is our *pattern*—"the possibility of our race made real." If He were God—a partaker of God's nature, as the orthodox maintain—



The excellence of love, as softening and perfecting the sterner character of the older philosophies, was the distinguishing characteristic of the preaching of Jesus. Truth and justice had been preached before: for them Christianity did nothing. There is no higher or purer morality inculcated in the New Testament than is to be found in the writings of the Stoical philosophers, or than is exemplified in the life of the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius. It has been truly remarked that philosophy was for him what religion was for Saint Louis. Titus and Marcus Aurelius did for the sake of humanity that which their successors under the new dispensation are induced to do for the sake of Jesus.

If we go to an earlier period of the world—that depicted by Homer—the *Juventus mundi* of Mr. Gladstone, we find a system prevailing which, as Mr. Gladstone says, ‘served in an important degree the purpose of a religion to control the passions and acts of men. . . . It menaced the excesses of power; it prescribed the duties of reverence to age and authority; of hospitality to the stranger, and of mercy to the poor.’ (211.) Again, Mr. Gladstone says: ‘Such a scheme of religion, though failing grossly in the government of the passions and in upholding the standard of moral duties, tended powerfully to produce a lofty self-respect, and a large, free, and varied conception of humanity.’

It was one stage in the progressive development of religion.

The system of morality worked out by the Stoics anticipated in many respects that of Christianity, though laying the main stress on a different order of virtues. The doctrine of universal

then they are guilty of a cruel mockery in speaking of Him as a type, a model of human excellence. How can one endowed with the perfections of a God be an example to beings encumbered with the weaknesses of humanity?’ (p. 240.)

brotherhood was cordially recognised by them, and the consequent duty of each man dedicating his life to the welfare of others. The satires of Persius breathe a high strain of pure morality. 'Il fait la guerre,' says M. Martha, in the work already cited, 'aux passions, à l'avarice, à la mollesse, à l'amour, à l'ambition.' (p. 75.) Speaking of his second satire, Bishop Burnet says 'it may well pass for one of the best lectures in divinity.' 'What Persius teaches,' says Dryden, 'may be taught from pulpits with more profit to the audience than all the nice speculations of divinity and controversies concerning faith, which are more for the profit of the shepherd than for the edification of the flock.'

Seneca again and again insists on the testimony of a good conscience, submission to the will of God (sometimes he uses the plural word Deos,) and confidence in His providence. 'On pourrait inscrire,' says M. Martha, 'en tête de bien des lettres de Sénèque à Lucilius les titres que présentent souvent les *lettres spirituelles* de nos directeurs sur le bon emploi du temps, sur les occasions et les tentations, sur la présence de Dieu, sur la mauvaise honte, sur les conversions lâches, sur la persévérance et l'impénitence finale, sur les maux attachés à un état de grandeur, sur la solide gloire, sur la préparation à la mort pour la rendre digne et courageuse.' (p. 94.)\*

\* See also the same work (p. 200 to the end of the chapter), where he notices the *Discourses of Epictetus* collected by his pupil Arrian, where Epictetus propounds a philosophical mission or apostleship, moral and religious, with as much earnestness and submission to the Divine will as anything to be found in the Christian writers; and he enjoins celibacy on grounds similar to those on which it is required from Roman Catholic priests. 'Notre Philosophe,' says Martha, 'a l'humanité pour famille; les hommes sont ses fils; les femmes sont ses filles. C'est comme tels qu'il va les trouver tous, comme tels qu'il veille sur tous, parce qu'il est leur père, leur frère et le ministre de leur père à tous' (τοῦ κοινοῦ πατρὸς ὑπηρέτης). (p. 204.)

The discourses of Epictetus are full of religious feeling. 'The first thing to learn,' he says, 'is that there is a God; that His knowledge pervades the whole universe, and that it extends not only to our acts, but to our thoughts and feelings.'

So much does some of Seneca's teaching resemble the Christian doctrine that it has been contended (though on insufficient grounds) that he had been a pupil of St. Paul. In one point it especially differed from the teaching of Jesus. Self-improvement, not the doing of good to others, was the main object of the teaching of Seneca. The absence of humility and of consideration for the poorer brethren is what, as much as anything, distinguished this doctrine from that of Jesus. And what was especially wanting to give life and vigour to it, such as attended the preaching of the Apostles and the early Christians, was the Hebrew element—a belief in a personal God, the persuasion of intimate communion with Him, and the belief in an early resurrection preached by Jesus. 'La doctrine stoïque,' says Martha, 'n'offrait au peuple que des préceptes et non pas des espérances ou des consolations. Le Stoïcisme n'avait de prise que sur les esprits élevés qui se sentaient une grande ambition morale.' 'Philosophy,' as Lecky has remarked, 'was admirably fitted to dignify and ennoble, but altogether impotent to regenerate mankind. It did much to encourage virtue, but little or nothing to restrain vice.'

Nothing, indeed, can be more striking than the contrast between the state of utter demoralisation and brutal depravity in which the masses of the people were sunk, and the beauty of the ethical system in vogue among the more cultivated classes under the Roman emperors. Ethics were a part of philosophy only. They did not enter into the religion of the Greeks and Romans, and there were no institutions among them to bring home its precepts or its sublime motives to the masses of the people, so as in any way to influence their conduct. Their worship was ritual merely; the communication of religious or moral truths was no part of its object; nor did the Pagan priest or flamen ever dream of any such function as

teaching. Christianity on the contrary made moral teaching a main function of its clergy. Its aim was to place morality under religious sanction—to incorporate it with religion.

In accounting for the extraordinary success that attended the preaching of Jesus, we cannot doubt that what lay at its root—what more than anything added force and motive to the preaching—was the Gospel which He announced—the good tidings which He Himself proclaimed, and which He commissioned His disciples to preach, viz., the immediate coming of the kingdom of heaven.\* It proved, indeed, unfounded in fact, but it was firmly believed at the time, and it gave the hold upon the minds of men that was necessary to lift them out of the condition of utter demoralisation in which they were sunk, and for which the cold dictates of reason and all moral teaching were quite powerless. But being once so raised, mankind then became amenable to higher instruction. The mistake that is made is to suppose that after the introduction of Christianity into the world there was to be no further progress; that religion was to be the one thing unimprovable in the world. The real glory of Christianity should be, on the contrary, that it has enabled us to take the ground, and that it is adapted to lead us on with the world's progress to something higher and more perfect than itself. If Christianity is to be considered as a system imposed by Divine decree, unchangeable and unimprovable, it becomes in fact a barrier to human progress in its highest concerns.†

Morality and virtue are not without power in the world,

\* See Note p. 145.

† The historical test of the truth of the Christian doctrines was their fitness at the time of the introduction of Christianity to regenerate the then world. That they were so fitted is proved by the result. The belief was suited to the circumstances of the time, just as Roman Catholic guidance was suited, as Macaulay

independently of all systems of religion, and even of all considerations of an hereafter, when once a state of society has been reached in which their voice can be heard. 'Virtue,' as Wilhelm von Humboldt beautifully remarks in his treatise on *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, 'harmonises so sweetly and naturally with man's original inclinations; the feelings of love, of social concord, of justice, have in them something so dear and prepossessing; those of disinterested effort, of self-sacrifice, seem things so sublime and ennobling; and the thousand relations that grow out of these feelings in domestic and social life contribute so largely to human happiness, that it is far less necessary to look for new incentives to virtuous action than simply to leave for those already implanted in the soul a more free and unhindered operation.'

It must not be supposed that if the claim of Christianity to be regarded as a miraculous revelation be proved to be without foundation, therefore Christianity would cease to be esteemed, and that there would be no more Christians. A man may be a Christian gentleman\* (for well does the epithet 'Christian' imply the higher elements of the character of a gentleman—all those dispositions which make us affable and courteous, gentle

remarks, to a certain stage in the history of the human mind. There is a period when even *superstition* is serviceable.

'Fancy is the power  
That first unsensualises the dark mind,  
Giving it new delights, and bids it swell  
With wild activity; and peopling air,  
By obscure fears of beings invisible  
Emanicipates it from the grosser thrall  
Of the present impulse, teaching self-control,  
Till superstition, with unconscious hand,  
Seat reason on her throne.'—COLERIDGE.

\* 'The best of men  
That e'er wore earth about Him was a sufferer,  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed.'—DEKKER.

and kind, deferential and yet sincere and truthful) without believing the miraculous story of the introduction of Christianity into the world, or adopting all the doctrines imputed to its Founder. To take pride in the name of Foxite or Pittite, when those terms were in vogue, did not imply an admiration of the infirmities which dimmed the splendour of the great men from whom those names were derived.

The singular notion seems to have possessed itself of the minds of many worthy people, that the great blessings to humanity which followed the introduction of Christianity into the world are in some way bound up with the nation's belief in the supernatural doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement, and that if these be given up, we must necessarily fall back into the low state of morality which prevailed before the introduction of Christianity, and that we shall have no more charitable institutions, no pious and excellent ladies devoting themselves as we now witness, in a manner beyond all praise, to the relief of sickness, destitution, and distress of every kind. But there is no ground for this apprehension. These things will still go on independently of the dogmatic system which it is the business of our costly Establishment to maintain, and perhaps flourish all the more from being freed from such encumbrance.

So far as any evidence has come down to us, Jesus does not seem to have intended to establish a dogmatic system. It is inconceivable, if He deemed belief in a doctrinal system an essential part of religion, that He should have been at no pains on any occasion to propound the doctrines, or to make known what they were. His teaching was all of an opposite character.

It is the more remarkable, if there was any supernaturally communicated or recorded body of Christian truth, such as the Christian Canon is now assumed to be, that it was not formally

authenticated and attested in some way; because, the authors of the works supposed to have been divinely inspired being Jews, and accustomed to a recognised Jewish Canon, the importance of such authentication and attestation could hardly have escaped their attention. Yet we have no trace of anything of this kind, nor is there any evidence in history of the existence of any authoritative books among Christians, much, if at all, before A.D. 150. Passages quoted in some of the most ancient Christian writers are the first evidence of the existence of any such authentic books, and our Bible critics inform us that until the last quarter of the second century this source of information is wanting. See Smith's *History of the Bible*, vol. ii. 507.\* The common opinion that the gospels have, from the time of the Apostles, been universally acknowledged, is entirely without foundation.

By what steps the simple doctrine preached by Jesus, and which was so well adapted to lay hold of the classes to which it was more especially addressed, afterwards came to be developed into the mysterious system of dogmatic Christianity which we have seen since prevailing, it does not seem to me material to attempt to inquire. The contrast is certainly striking between the simple beneficent teaching which fell from the lips of Jesus, and the incomprehensible system of the Church by which it has been overlaid. The Church in reality busies itself more with errors of opinion than with denouncing conduct hurtful to mankind. According to the distinctive creed of the Church—that of St. Athanasius—everlasting destruction is threatened not to him who fails to do the will of God, but to him who fails to think rightly of the Trinity.

\* The conclusion at which Canon Westcott arrives is that there is no direct evidence of the existence of any of the Gospels until the end of the first quarter of the second century.—*Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, Macmillan & Co.

It is singular that the two great commandments emphatically laid down by Jesus—those which contain, in His view, the essence of all that His followers were required to know and to do—are ignored in the services of our Church. The old Ten Commandments of Moses are introduced into our formularies, and are everywhere conspicuous in our Church decorations, but the two which are *par excellence* distinctive of the teaching of Jesus are nowhere displayed.

That the Church had a very beneficial moral influence for many centuries after the introduction of Christianity, notwithstanding the vices and corruption of some of its members, need not be disputed. It was of inestimable value also in preserving and handing down the records of a past civilisation, many of which would otherwise have been lost. As Macaulay has observed : ‘ From the time when the Barbarians overran the Western Empire to the time of the revival of letters, the influence of the Church of Rome had been generally favourable to science, to civilisation, and to good government.’ So long as its dogmas were received with undoubting belief and were not at variance with the intelligence of the age, the whole worked harmoniously. In course of time, however, as was sure to happen under a dogmatic system, differences of opinion and religious sects grew up, and these led to endless controversies, dissensions in families, persecutions, public and private, and religious wars, to such an extent as almost to make it doubtful whether, on the whole, the Christian Church—not the teaching and example of Jesus, but the Church which has usurped His name—notwithstanding all we owe to it, has been a blessing to mankind or the contrary.\*

\* The following picture of the Church and its history is from the pen of one who was at least an earnest friend to the Church, the late Dean Alford :—



It is observable that credit is very commonly claimed on behalf of Christianity for moral and social reforms which are not due to its founders, but to advances in knowledge and civilisation subsequent to its introduction. In these advances the share which belongs to Christianity, although not inconsiderable, is yet but one among many and complex elements. Invaluable as was the religious element at the introduction of Christianity in rendering any moral reformation possible in the then state of the world, still, without the intellectual element no considerable improvement could have been made. In truth, the world has been more indebted to philosophy and intellectual cultivation for the present improved state of morality than to theology or the influence of the Church. From the fifth to the sixteenth century the whole moral development of the Christian world was essentially theological. Theology was never more in the ascendant; yet in the absence of intellectual development, to which it was in fact hostile, it was powerless to ensure even a moderate degree of morality among either the laity or the clergy. As the late Mr. Buckle has forcibly pointed out in his *History of Civilisation in England*, when the power of the Church was most dominant, morals, public and private, were at a very low ebb.\* The great change which has taken place in modern times is mainly owing to intellectual cultivation. .

'Alas! what is the history of the Church but the history of the world's hatred more embittered; of the world's selfishness more intensified; of the world's pride made prouder still? In the records of the past ages of our era, where shall we turn for the most flagrant cruelties? To the history of the Church. Where for the basest hypocrisies? Again to the history of the Church . . . . . to that sad and dreary page whereon are written the crimes, the strifes, the wars the controversies of Churchmen.'—*Quebec Chapel Sermons*, i. 132.

\* It is remarkable that the bull-fights of the circus, a spectacle which approaches more nearly to the gladiatorial shows of ancient Rome than anything in modern times, are tolerated as a public institution only in Spain, where the influence of the priesthood is more powerful than in any other country in Europe.

The abolition of slavery and polygamy may be cited as instances of social reforms for which Christianity is apt to take credit without any just title. Slavery and polygamy were prevailing institutions at the time of the introduction of Christianity, and it might have been expected that there would be some authoritative denunciation of these practices; but we find no precept in the Gospel forbidding them. With advancing knowledge and refinement, aided, no doubt, by the Christian spirit derived from the teaching and example of Jesus, they have been abandoned, and the old logical fallacy is resorted to by the advocates of Christianity; *post hoc erga propter hoc*.

Further experience and observation of their effects on the well-being of society have made it necessary to disapprove and systematically to abandon some of the precepts of Jesus—those e.g., relating to almsgiving and mendicancy. Give to all who ask is the precept of Jesus, no inquiry being suggested whether the beggar be idle or unworthy. Mendicancy is sanctioned, but we do not find anywhere in the precepts of Jesus industry enforced as a duty.

The precept to give alms in secret that you may be rewarded openly is one of a very questionable character. If alms be judiciously given, that is, in the only way in which they are of real benefit to the poor, it is all the better that they be given openly, as an example and encouragement to others, and this is now the universal practice. We see the names of the dignitaries of our Church conspicuously printed at the head of our charitable subscription lists. The giving of alms at all in order that we may be rewarded is not a very high-toned proceeding. Greatly as the spirit of the New Testament is purer and more elevated than that of the elder Scriptures, it has too much of the leaven of the Hebrew religion, which I have already anim-

adverted on, where all is matter of bargain between Jehovah and His favourite people. Nothing is to be done for humanity or because it is right. What Titus and Marcus Aurelius, and we may add Jesus, did for humanity we are to do for the love of Jesus, who will reward us. As M. Rivarol remarks in one of his letters already referred to: 'S'il est vrai que nous ne fassions la charité que parce qu'elle nous doit être payée à usure et que Jésus-Christ nous tienne compte d'un verre d'eau donné en son nom, il faut avouer que notre charité, loin d'être une vertu, n'est qu'une industrie, et qu'un vrai chrétien n'est qu'un marchand qui place à gros intérêt.' (p. 155.) It must be admitted that in this respect the tone of Buddhism is higher than that of Christianity. For 'the Lord Buddha does not give the reward of merit, but if any do as he has taught they will find their recompense in the act.'

Again, if you would be perfect, the injunction is to sell all you have and give it to the poor. And this, it is clear from the context, Jesus meant to be taken literally. Poverty is expressly commended for itself. Jesus declares the poor to be blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of God; and His precepts are well adapted to foster poverty. Yet it cannot be doubted that abject poverty presents an insuperable bar to that improvement and elevation of character which it is a main object of religion to promote. Monachism would seem to be the ideal of perfect Christianity—the dedication of one's goods to the poor, and one's life to acts of devotion.\* It has been encouraged accordingly, and we find, as observed by Mr. Lecky in his work

\* 'Inversion strange that unto one who lives  
For self, and struggles with himself alone,  
The amplest share of heavenly favour gives,  
That to a monk allots, in the esteem  
Of God and man, place higher than to him  
Who on the good of others builds his own.'—WORDSWORTH.

on the *History of Morals*, already quoted, 'that in all Catholic countries where ecclesiastical influences have been permitted to develope unmolested, the monastic organisation has proved a deadly canker, corroding the prosperity of the nation, withdrawing multitudes from all production; encouraging a blind and pernicious almsgiving; diffusing habits of improvidence through the poorer classes; fostering an ignorant admiration for saintly poverty, and an equally ignorant antipathy to the habits and aims of an industrial civilisation. They have paralysed energy, and proved an insuperable barrier to material progress.' (ii. p. 100.)

Again, improvidence (one of the most fruitful sources of misery in this life) is encouraged. Take no thought for to-morrow. Trust to your heavenly Father even as the sparrows do. Do not lay up stores for future necessities.

These precepts advancing knowledge has shown to be at variance with the best interests of society; and they have been condemned by all intelligent men. Philanthropists are now generally agreed that the poorer classes can only be effectively raised from their sad condition by their own industry, forethought, and thrift; that to labour and lay up provision for their children is a pressing duty, and that the precept *not* to lay up, equally with that which enjoins us to 'give to him, that asketh,' is hurtful to the best interests of society. The precepts, however, still exercise a pernicious influence on many well-meaning persons, and the clergy, if sincere, can hardly avoid enforcing them.

If Jesus is to be regarded as a human teacher it is not surprising that He was not in advance of His age, and that His teachings do not anticipate those plans for bettering the condition and elevating the character of the lower classes which have since approved themselves and been adopted by enlight-

ened philanthropists; but His apparent ignorance or disregard of these necessary means for improving the condition of the poor do throw doubts upon the claim advanced for Him to be regarded as a teacher endowed with supernatural wisdom. Intellectually, Jesus seems to have shared the imperfections of His age, whilst morally excelling His predecessors or contemporaries, as did Shakspeare all other poets—the living type of an ideal humanity.

It is very possible that the words which fell from the lips of Jesus have not in all cases been accurately reported, and that if the effect of His teaching had been correctly understood and faithfully reported, it would not have been open to the above criticism.\* However this may be, these imperfections do not

\* What makes it probable that owing to the inability of His followers thoroughly to apprehend His meaning, the words of Jesus have sometimes been misreported, is the fact that many of the sayings and reasonings imputed to Him are such as hardly could have been uttered by a person of so much intelligence as even the imperfect record that we have of His sayings and doings leaves no doubt must have characterised Jesus.

Instances of this kind are the following:—

In the case of the question put to Jesus by the Scribes as to the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, the answer, if all the circumstances are truly reported, is an unworthy evasion.

If the question had been, To whom is tribute to be paid? it would have been relevant to call for a coin; and it appearing that the head and circumscription of Cæsar were upon it (whence it would follow that Cæsar was the governor to whom tribute was payable), the answer would have been pertinent: Render *therefore* to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's.

But the question being whether it is lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar, it is no answer, but an evasion, to call for a coin, and finding on it the head and circumscription of Cæsar, to say, Render *therefore* to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. We cannot suppose that Jesus meant to imply that the coin must be the property of Cæsar because Cæsar's head was upon it. But on any other supposition it is simply a self-evident proposition mystified by the reference to the coin.

So, with regard to the question of the resurrection, the words put into the mouth of Jesus (Luke xx. 37) can hardly be characterised as anything but a quibble. 'Now that the dead are raised even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living.'

When Moses called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and

detract from the value of the moral teachings—the most sublime and benevolent ever offered to man—which seem to have been the great object of the mission of Jesus. It is only when claim is made for the Christian writings, as they have come down to us, that every word is Divinely inspired, that it becomes necessary to point out how fatal such teaching, if really followed, would be to the social well-being of mankind.

There is this further difficulty, as has been somewhere remarked, attending a belief in the dogma of the perfect divinity of the Author of Christianity, namely, that He must in that case have known the full force of the expressions used by Him, and their effect upon the future of the world. Consider the words: ‘Take, eat, this is my body.’ It is hardly possible to over-estimate the misery brought into the world by the use of these ambiguous words, and which might have been avoided by a very few words of explanation. And this, be it remembered, is not unavoidable evil resulting from the government of the world by general laws, but, by the supposition evil specially and miraculously brought into the world, with full knowledge of the consequences, and therefore by design. It is truly bringing not peace, but a sword.

Next to Jesus, its immediate founder, Christianity would seem to have been indebted for its early reception and wide diffusion among mankind to the zeal and energy, and to the extraordinary powers of persuasion, of St. Paul, more than to any one other assignable cause. He has been called the second founder of Christianity. All the Apostles, indeed, were persons distin-

the God of Jacob, he clearly meant merely that He was recognised and worshipped by these Patriarchs when living as their God.

It seems more probable that in these and some other cases of a like character Jesus has been misunderstood by the simple and ignorant people about Him, who have handed down their misconceptions as His sayings, than that Jesus should ever have indulged in puerilities of this character.

guished by remarkable zeal and enthusiasm. The great sagacity and knowledge of character evinced by Jesus in the selection of His disciples is only equalled by the extraordinary influence over them which He acquired, and His power of inspiring them with unbounded faith in His Divine mission, a faith which we cannot doubt that He himself sincerely held;\* but the self-appointed Apostle Paul seems to have exceeded them all in the untiring energy, enthusiasm, and spirit of self-sacrifice with which he devoted his life to the cause he had undertaken. Along with these, his extraordinary eloquence and power of persuasion have caused his somewhat *doctrinaire* teaching so to take hold of the minds of a large section of the Christian world as almost to throw into the shade the mild and beneficent and simple doctrines that characterised the teaching of Jesus.

Matthew Arnold, in the papers on St. Paul and Protestantism in the *Cornhill Magazine* already referred to, is at some pains to show that St. Paul is not justly chargeable with the revolting doctrines for which the English Puritans claim him as the leading authority. No doubt Mr. Arnold is right in saying that the desire of righteousness (what he calls 'the master impulse of Hebraism') was that which was ever present with Paul. It is true that he was ever straining after what he deemed the righteousness of God—an absolute conformity with the moral order and with God's will. Nothing can be more admirable than St. Paul's devotion to the task of bringing the world to the knowledge and practice of what he calls righteousness—to doing what he deemed to be the will of

\* 'That Jesus might conscientiously believe Himself inspired from above is very possible: the whole religion of the Jews, inculcated from His infancy, was founded on the belief of Divine inspiration. Elevated by the enthusiasm of a warm and pure heart, conscious of the high strains of an eloquence which had not been taught Him, He might readily mistake the coruscations of His own fine genius for inspiration of a higher order.'—Jefferson to John Adams, *Jefferson's Correspondence*.

God. According to his lights he seems to have been one of the most exemplary characters that the world has seen ; and by his impetuous temperament, his enthusiasm, almost amounting to fanaticism, his fervid imagination, and perhaps even the illogical character of his mind (for without qualities of this kind no great revolution was ever suddenly brought about), to have been singularly fitted for the task which he had taken upon himself of forwarding the spread of Christianity. Unhappily, although the Apostle of the Gentiles, he was still a Jew, thoroughly imbued with all the Jewish prejudices, and especially with the unworthy notions of the Deity which were at the bottom of their religion. In this respect St. Paul is widely distinguished from Jesus, himself also a Jew. Nothing can be conceived more opposite in spirit and character than the God of love preached by Jesus—His Father and the Universal Father of Mankind, and the God of the elder Hebrew Scriptures—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—a severe, jealous, exclusive, and capricious national God, and who might with almost more propriety be called a God of vengeance than a God of love. Hardly less striking is the contrast between the simple religion of Jesus and the mystical system inculcated by St. Paul.

St. Paul's notion of God's righteousness would not satisfy the conceptions of righteousness formed by an intelligent and good man of the present day. He sees nothing in the dealings of Jehovah with Pharaoh, as related by Moses, inconsistent with righteousness, and he undertakes the vindication of them against a supposed objector ; and in his impetuosity, as is not unfrequently the case with him, he is illogical. ' God, to make His power known '—such is Paul's statement of the argument—'hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth.' (Romans x. 18.) 'Thou wilt then say unto



me,' he continues, 'why doth He yet find fault; for who hath resisted His will?' The objection seems a reasonable one, and the objector's argument unanswerable. If, says he, God makes one man good and another man wicked, and hardeneth him in his course, why does He still find fault, seeing that no one can resist His decree? St. Paul, instead of answering the objection, exclaims against the objector's presumption: 'Nay, but oh, man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou formed me thus?' The thing formed made no such reply. He did not say to his Maker, 'Why hast Thou formed me thus?' He said, 'Having formed me thus, why dost Thou find fault with me for being what Thou hast made me?'

The theme mainly insisted on by St. Paul is the self-sacrifice of Jesus which has reconciled man to God. I am far from undervaluing the self-sacrifice of Jesus. That His cruel death on the cross was submitted to by Him from a genuine love of mankind, and in the sincere belief that His mission called on him to make this sacrifice for the good of His fellow-creatures, there seems no sufficient reason to doubt. And perhaps more than anything else it has had the effect of kindling in the hearts of men, and still more in woman's heart, an enthusiastic love of Jesus, manifesting itself in works of charity, kindness, and love to their poor and suffering brethren. Long may the kindly influence last.

As to the reconciliation dogma, it is a mystery which passes all comprehension. According to St. Paul, Christian ministers are ambassadors of Christ, praying and beseeching us to be reconciled to God. But why all this pains to reconcile us to God? What educated man feels anything in his nature repugnant to or requiring reconciliation with a just and merciful Creator? It is only on the supposition that God is a jealous, capricious,

vindictive Being, such as the God of the early Hebrews, that there can be any difficulty in reconciling enlightened men to Him. Surely, if reconciliation is needed, the way to accomplish it is to open men's minds to the truth, and to show, as may readily be done, that God is not the monster of injustice and cruelty that He has been painted, but a just and merciful Being, the Father of His people, the God of Jesus. Put the case of the best of human fathers and an erring child. What need of an atonement? What necessity for a go-between? What mystery in reconciliation? Would not the father at once receive the repentant child into his bosom? As indeed Jesus makes the father in the parable receive the prodigal son.

At the bottom of this doctrine of reconciliation with God is the notion of what is called the 'mystery of sin,' in some way rooted in our nature, and for which, however it got there, we are supposed to be accountable, and until we be redeemed from it, God, it is assumed in the Church System, cannot be reconciled with us.\* It is difficult to understand how such a notion can have entered the minds of reasonable men. We are such creatures as God has made us, no doubt constantly liable to err, but capable of indefinite improvement. What is wanted is improved education. With each step in improvement we become less and less liable to error. In the meanwhile we have to take the consequences of our errors. If we disregard the laws which God has ordained for the government of the

\* According to the second of the Articles of Religion, Jesus died to reconcile the Father to mankind. This doctrine has however been questioned. In a letter to the *Guardian* of May 3, 1871, with reference to the judgment of the Judicial Committee of Privy Council in the case of Mr. Voysey, the Dean of Westminster says: 'He is condemned for having contradicted a paragraph in the second Article which declares that the object of the Redemption was to reconcile the Father to mankind. I need hardly say that this contradiction is one which appears not only in the writings of the greatest divines of the early Church, but also in some of the most eminent of our own:' some of whom the Dean cites.

world, or the laws which society has instituted, we have to bear the consequences of our default, whether it have proceeded from ignorance, from negligence, or from design. Such is the constitution of the world. But there is in this natural process nothing like sin and the punishment of sin as it is understood by St. Paul and the Church. Nor is there in this anything to make God angry, as the Hebrew prophets and St. Paul constantly represent Him to be. 'He is a righteous Judge, strong and patient, and who is provoked every day.' Why is He provoked if things have taken the course which He by His general laws for the government of the world has appointed? \*

What is called self-indulgence, i.e., the yielding to our passions and desires, without a due regard to the evil thereby inflicted on ourselves and others, is the great source of evil in the world. It inflicts on ourselves, and those dependent on us, sickness, disease, poverty, the disapprobation of our fellow-men, and, more than all, self-reproach and remorse. These are the natural punishments following the neglect of the moral law, which prohibits such indulgence; just as imprisonment, whipping and death are the punishments following the violation of the municipal law, and which it is necessary to impose in order to deter us from the indulgence of our desires and passions in a way injurious to others. There is nothing in these passions or desires in themselves wrong; all the natural appetites are needful, and, subject to due control, tend to the welfare of the individual possessing them and to the good of the world. It is only when their undue indulgence is not checked by the still small voice

\* The use of such expressions will perhaps be defended on the ground that they signify in a forcible manner the *divine* authority of the moral law, a disregard of which evinces, therefore, disobedience to God, such as, if God were a human ruler, would make Him angry. But it is an anthropomorphic and unworthy use of God's name.

implanted within us that they become injurious, or what in clerical phrase is called sinful. As the true reward of virtue is the satisfaction of the inward sense,

The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy,

so the true punishment of moral evil or sin is shame and remorse. It is rather a corrective medicine than a vindictive punishment, intended to lead us to repentance and amendment of life. It is the great provision for the moral progress of mankind. We are so constituted that we cannot help reproaching ourselves for all failure of duty, for all conscious disobedience to the higher law within us. Our conscience is a monitor that will not be put by; and the great business of education—that conveyed by parents, teachers, and preachers—is first to enlighten the conscience, and then to train us to habits of obedience to its still small voice.

St. Paul's notion of the utter worthlessness of the natural man,\* and of all his strivings after self-improvement, and the dogma always insisted on by him that God's grace is everything, and that for man to rely on any efforts or merits of his own is to forfeit all chance of Divine help, are anything but favourable to the improvement of the human character, and are directly at variance with the great truth which is beginning to be generally acknowledged—that it is to a man's own exertions and self-reliance that he is to be taught to trust. With this view, self-respect is a feeling by all means to be cultivated. 'I am fully persuaded,' says Addison, 'that one of the best springs of generous

\* 'He delighted,' says Mr. Hutton, in his defence of St. Paul against the strictures of M. Renan (*Essays Theological and Literary*, vol. i.), 'to present humanity as a naked, shivering worthless beggar, scarcely an entity at all until it recognised fully its weakness and nakedness, after which that very weakness and nakedness became its strength and glory, as attesting whence it borrowed all that might seem to be of any worth in what it had.' (p. 325.)

and worthy actions is the having generous and worthy thoughts of ourselves.' Dr. Newman, it is true, says self-respect is but another name for pride. Whatever name we give it, it is one of the strongest safeguards of virtue and of all that is excellent in conduct. I accept the character which Dr. Newman contemptuously assigns to it. 'It becomes,' he says, in his ninth discourse *On University Education*, 'the safeguard of chastity, the guarantee of veracity in high and low; it is the very household god of the Protestant, inspiring neatness and decency in the servant-girl, propriety of carriage and refined manners in her mistress, uprightness, manliness, and generosity in the head of the family.'

It is this false view of the spirit of religion which has too long justified the charge brought against religion, that it abases man rather than elevates him. 'Enfin,' says M. Rivarol, in the letter already referred to, 'une grande différence entre la religion et la morale, c'est que l'une abat l'homme et que l'autre l'élève: l'une se fonde sur l'humilité, l'autre sur l'estime de soi-même.'

There is one characteristic of St. Paul which should not be lost sight of in the estimate of his testimony as one of the chief historians of Christianity; viz., his singular credulity and laxity of statement. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, x. 4, he does not hesitate to state (on the authority probably of some Jewish tradition) that the Rock of Horeb, out of which Moses struck water, followed the Israelites in their wanderings, and supplied them with water. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of his inaccuracy and laxity of expression is that in which he recites the testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, of which he makes himself one of the witnesses, 1 Corinthians, xv. He was seen, he says, of five hundred of the brethren at once—a statement for which we have no authority but his own, and he

was not in Jerusalem at the time. Moreover he adds, 'Last of all he was seen of me also.' One naturally concludes from this that he was one of the ordinary witnesses to the resurrection. This, we know, was not the fact; St. Paul must mean to refer to the vision seen by him on his journey to Damascus, when, according to Acts ix. 1—9, he saw a light from heaven shining around him, and heard a voice, but he does not appear to have seen Jesus. Of what value is the testimony of a man who writes with this kind of laxity?\*

St. Paul's Christianity, it has been remarked, is essentially not a thing of fact, but of ideas. He does not write like a man who had examined the question in hand by the tests usually applied to matters of fact, but like a man who had studied the prophecies, and made a scheme of theology from them, and had visions of the Lord, and had been in the third heaven.

Bearing in mind the peculiar characteristic just adverted to, we shall be the less surprised at the remarkable contradiction between many of St. Paul's statements and the account of the same facts in the Acts of the Apostles. The account given in the Acts of the conversion, life, and labours of St. Paul, is in many important points at variance with his own account in his Epistles, the Epistle to the Galatians especially. It is hardly possible to conceive two accounts of the same matters more contradictory one of another.† On which of the con-

\* Mr. Hutton, though a devoted admirer of St. Paul, does not conceal from himself St. Paul's want of scrupulosity of statement, which may perhaps be accounted for from his low estimate of morality and self-respect. He says, in the work already referred to, 'It was of the very essence of his type of faith not to be over scrupulous in details, so long as he made himself of no account and made God all in all; and this led him, perhaps more than once, into seizing hold of weapons close at hand for making an impression, which he could afterwards see were *not* divine instruments at all.' (p. 329.)

† See this subject examined with great industry and much critical acumen in the introduction to a small treatise on *The Credibility of the Gospel Narratives*, published by Mr. Scott, of Ramsgate.

flicting accounts are we to rely? Both cannot be true. Naturally one should have been disposed to accept St. Paul's account of his own proceedings, but unhappily his habitual disregard of accuracy leaves us in perplexity which to choose.

It is particularly unfortunate that the testimony of St. Paul should be thus discredited, as he is the principal one of the very few known eye-witnesses to any of the facts recorded in the New Testament. Of the authors of the Synoptic Gospels or Acts of the Apostles we know almost absolutely nothing, and there is no evidence that any one of them was an eye-witness of the facts which he purports to relate.

We are therefore without any satisfactory historical evidence of the introduction of Christianity; and many of the facts related in such histories as we have are of such a character that we should not credit them at the present day even if clearly attested by such eye-witnesses as are supposed to have attested the marvels recorded in the Gospel. We do not believe the miracles of the Roman Catholic Church of the present day, though vouched by a very considerable amount of credible testimony. How can we believe miracles of a former age, for which we have absolutely no credible testimony at all?

How much longer the civilised world will receive Christianity as a supernatural system it is impossible to conjecture. There are many indications that the Established Church will not be allowed to remain much longer on its present footing, and it becomes interesting to consider what were best to be done with this great establishment. Looking at it as a branch of the public service intended for the promotion of religion and morality, one cannot but regret that it should have fallen so lamentably short of what might have been accomplished by such a body of educated men so endowed

with wealth, and enjoying such unbounded authority, had they filled their true position of leaders of the intellect and piety of the nation, giving to the religious spirit a direction in harmony with the progress of knowledge, and at the same time acting as a mighty agency for promoting the education of the people.

This high mission the Church has hitherto failed to fulfil; and in its proceedings in Convocation, and on such other public occasions as present themselves of manifesting its views, it holds out little encouragement to us to hope that it will ever take a more enlightened view of its great duties. Though we hear much of Church reform, none of the reforms proposed are such as would justifiably allow it to be retained on its present footing as a national institution—the great organ for the spiritual improvement of the nation. What is proposed is little more than a reform of the Lectionary, some greater freedom as to the use of certain of the formularies, and some amount of relief from subscription to the Articles of Religion. After these reforms, the Church would still remain encumbered with its old dogmatisms; differing little from any of the larger voluntary religious denominations, except in being maintained in great splendour at the expense of the State, and in return submitting to its yoke. This is a state of things which, even on the score of justice to the rest of the nation, can hardly be allowed to go on much longer.

It seems probable that a majority of the nation hold religious opinions at variance with those professed by the Anglican Church; not to mention the wide dissensions existing in that Church itself. The various bodies of Nonconformists, with the Roman Catholics, are supposed to be, collectively, little if at all less in number than the adherents of the Established Church. And if from those nominally adhering be deducted the daily increasing number of persons who no longer hold the



Church's creed, it would, there is little doubt, be found that the persons really adhering in opinion to the Established Church are in a minority. But whether in a minority or a majority, upon what principle of justice can it be allowed that the funds intended to provide religious ministrations for the people generally, should be applied exclusively for the benefit of one class of religionists, even if they were, what it seems probable they are not, a majority of the nation?

Let me not however be misunderstood. Although I think that the Established Church cannot, in justice to the other religious bodies of the country which are not endowed by the State, be allowed to retain the wealth which was designed for the support of a Church meant to be the Church of the whole nation, it is by no means my intention to express an opinion in favour of the theological views or of the spirit of the Dissenting bodies generally as compared with those of the Established Church. On the contrary, I believe that whilst they, in common with the Established Church, hold doctrines adverse to the progress of the world and the well-being of mankind, there is among the members of the Established Church more learning, more moderation, and more liberality of opinion than is to be met with among what are called the orthodox Dissenting bodies.

With the precedent of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish branch of the late united Church of England and Ireland before us, a case differing in degree only from that of the English branch, we can have little doubt that the English branch is fated to be disestablished also, and to be called upon to give up the funds at its disposal for national purposes, after making due provision for existing beneficial interests.

To maintain the present Anglican Church with its immense

establishment as a State Church, for the purpose of performing such ceremonial duties as at present engage nearly the whole of its attention, is a proposition that will hardly permanently commend itself to the intelligence of the present age. Those duties would seem to be the performance of the appointed religious services on the occasion of births, marriages, and deaths, and the conducting of public worship in the stated weekly and daily services of the Church.

With respect to baptism, I have in a former letter, in noticing the part taken by the Church in the religious instruction of the young, pointed out some of the objections to that ceremony as conducted by the Church. With regard to marriage, it is so serious a step in life, and the marriage contract is of so important a kind, that it is not surprising that many persons should desire that the occasion of entering into it should be solemnised by some kind of religious ceremony. Few persons of any refinement or proper feeling as regards the relations between the two sexes would, however, desire that the ceremony should be such as that prescribed by our Church. And to impose a necessity for any religious ceremony on those who do not desire it, is a usurpation on the part of the Church that cannot be justified. So with regard to the present burial service, there is much that is objectionable to many of the members of the Church themselves. Matters of this kind could be more readily reformed if the Established Church were placed on the same footing with other religious bodies and were left to govern itself, untrammelled by the State.

It will startle many excellent persons to say so, but if the matter be dispassionately examined, I think it must be admitted that in the Church services themselves there is much that is open to objection as they are at present conducted. Its formularies are no longer suited to the age. The creeds which

good people in the pride of orthodoxy go on repeating every week with so much complacency, and which they look upon as bonds of Christian union, are in fact stumbling-blocks in the way of that union. They rather serve to keep men apart than to bring them together. They would almost seem to have been framed for the purpose of promoting and perpetuating discord among Christians ; leading men to hate each other, rather than to love God.

Besides that the profession of theological creeds\* does not seem calculated in any way to promote morality or the practice of any Christian virtue, the habitual repetition of them as part of a religious ceremonial can hardly have other than an injurious effect on the mind. If the matters respecting which our belief is solemnly affirmed be self-evident and free from doubt, the practice would seem to be without any good effect ; but when it embraces matters as to which many of the persons thus solemnly pledging their belief must entertain some degree of doubt at least, as e.g. the descent of Jesus into hell, or the resurrection of *the body*, the practice must engender a habit of insincerity and indifference to truth which cannot but be injurious.

Other parts of the service are also open to objection.

It is not a healthful exercise to be constantly saying that there is no health in us. That we are liable to disease, physical or moral, is no ground for saying that there is no health in us. I trust that there is some health, and that we are resolved that, so far as in us lies, there shall be more. Again, to repeat habitually that we are sinners is not the way to become honest and truthful men. It is not well to accustom ourselves to

\* There is something characteristic in the simple creed avowed by the good French monarch Henri IV. in a letter written at the age of twenty-four to M. de Batz. He says : ' Ceus quy suyvent tout droyt leur consyance sont de ma relygyon ; et moy je suys de cele de tous ceus-là quy sont braves et bons.'

the notion that we are miserable sinners. Insincere as the profession generally is, we are too ready to take ourselves at our own estimate, and our self-respect being gone, if temptation fall in our way, why should we be at the pains to resist? We are already miserable sinners; it is but a question of little more or less. It is not a feeling to be encouraged.

Many of the prayers in the Church of England formularies are of a questionable character; they cannot but excite in the minds of the worshippers ideas of the Deity at variance with all that we know of His laws in the government of the world. We are perpetually asking God for the things which we want, as if we believed that they were to be obtained in that way by special interference in our behalf, and not by resorting to the means which He has appointed in the laws ordained by Him for the government of the world; forgetting, moreover, that, according to the Christian hypothesis, 'Our Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask.' And the exaggerated language of praise, I might almost say fulsome flattery, with which our prayers abound evince a very unworthy conception of the Divine nature, as if, like the least estimable of men, God could take delight in such adulation. How much more appropriate in this respect would seem to be a grateful acknowledgment in simple language, of the adorable wisdom and goodness displayed in the divine government of the world, by which countless blessings are placed within our reach; and along with this a recognition of the consequent duty to search out and adopt the appointed means to realise and diffuse those blessings, and so, according to our ability, to promote the well-being and happiness of all His creatures.

That prayers properly conceived may have a beneficial effect on the mind will readily be admitted. Much will always depend on the disposition of the individual. It is not necessary to sup-

pose that the laws which God has ordained for the government of the world will be relaxed at our intercession from time to time. From a long course of observation and repeated experience, we find, and our reason is at length firmly convinced, that the course of outward nature in the order of the world is not affected by prayer. We are reluctantly compelled to admit this. It is a great struggle to do so, being directly at variance with all the early impressions which we have received from the Hebrew sacred writings. But a stern Nemesis awaits us if we neglect to recognise this great truth.

On the other hand, many persons find that prayer reacts with beneficial effect on their own minds.\* In the presence of God—in communion with Him, as they believe—they feel their minds elevated and their purposes of amendment strengthened; they feel that their prayer for strength to do His will, to perform their duty, is answered. They feel their spirits refreshed, their courage renovated, and all their good resolutions confirmed and sanctified. It cannot be doubted that in this communion many Christians have found a source of spiritual strength which has enabled them to fight the battle of life, and has sustained

\* The following extract is from a paper of Professor Tyndall 'On the Constitution of the Universe' in the *Fortnightly Review* for December 1865 :—

'Those who devise prayers for change in the economy of nature admit that the age of miracles is past, and in the same breath they petition for the performance of miracles. They ask for fair weather and for rain, but they do not ask that water may flow up-hill; while the man of science clearly sees that the granting of the one petition would be just as much an infringement of the laws of conservation as the granting of the other. Holding this law to be permanent, he prays for neither. But this does not close his eyes to the fact that while prayer is thus impotent in external nature it may re-act with beneficent power upon the human mind. That prayer produces its effect, benign or otherwise, upon him who prays, is not only as indubitable as the law of conservation itself, but it will probably be found to illustrate that law in its ultimate expansion. And if our spiritual authorities could only devise a form in which the heart might express itself without putting the intellect to shame, they might utilise a power which they now waste, and make prayer, instead of a butt to the scorner, the potent inner supplement of noble outward life.'

them when all other support had seemed altogether unavailing. So long as the indulgence of these feelings is kept within due bounds, and so long as it does not induce us to neglect the natural means which God has appointed for accomplishing that which is the object of our prayer, and which it is the business of science to investigate, the effect can hardly be other than good.\*

The question is one that has perplexed many excellent people. They have doubted the fitness of addressing to the Deity prayers in the ordinary sense of the word—prayers for specific blessings, which is the vulgar notion of prayer. As one of Mr. Scott's anonymous lady contributors has said: 'I cannot ask such a Being to pay more attention to me if I praise Him than He would if I do not. Neither can I ask Him to regard my entreaties rather than His own wisdom in regulating the affairs of my life, or those of my friends. I cannot make Him human by defining Him, and attribute to Him that weakness of human nature which requires homage. I believe that the highest

\* The argument in favour of prayer for spiritual guidance is thus stated by Dr. Hinds, former Bishop of Norwich, in a paper published by Mr. Scott of Ramsgate, entitled *A Reply to the question Shall I seek Ordination in the Church of England?*

'I am fully alive to much that may be urged . . . against all efficacy in prayer. The Divine Ruler of the universe exercises His rule, it is said, by general laws. Let us not imagine that He will, at our request, cause those laws to be violated. Experience is appealed to in proof that He does not. Instances apparently to the contrary, are ascribed to accidental coincidence, or to the delusions of enthusiasm. Still, I say, pray. He who has made us has implanted in us an instinctive desire to do so; why, if we are not to obey it? And as for the argument that the Creator cannot be supposed to change the established course of His creation at the bidding of one of his creatures, the reply that I would make is this:—How do we know that praying, for which man is formed, may not, according to one of the general laws of the universe, act on other general laws to modify them? The system of the Universe is maintained by the action of one general law on another. Man, by the exercise of his intellect and bodily powers, gives this and that direction and application to the general laws of the material world. What is there irrational in supposing that *praying* may be, analogously, the agency of spirit on established spiritual laws, bending them to our purpose?' (p. 22.)

worship we can give Him is the pervading sense of His work in everything about us, and in ourselves, and the use of the faculties with which we are endowed to their legitimate end, until the sins and crime, the ignorance and mistakes, the griefs and agonies of life, are blotted out through perfect obedience.\*

The beautiful sonnet of the late Robert Roscoe is something similar in sentiment :—

Oh not in fear, great Author of my days,  
 I lift my voice to Thee—oh not in fear!  
 But as a babe within the refuge dear  
 Of its fond mother's breast its weak head lays,  
 Asks not in prayer nor tells its thanks in praise,  
 Yet finds support and comfort ever near,  
 Its gratitude a smile, its prayer a tear—  
 And, still receiving gladness, still repays.  
 Thus in the bosom of Thy tender care  
 I rest, O God, this perishable dust;  
 Silent and blessed, nor with praise and prayer  
 Profane my pure unalterable trust; †  
 Where'er I am enough that Thou art there,  
 Enough for me Thou art and Thou art just.

The encouragement given by our Church system to the practice of public morning prayer daily is hardly to be commended. It is true that the habit of punctual early rising which it enforces among certain of our young ladies is salutary, but this advantage is bought at too high a price if it cherish the superstitious feeling that prayers in a church or prayers read by a priest are more efficacious than those privately offered up in the closet. The efficacy of prayer is in its reaction on the heart of the suppliant; and surely this is greater, and the communion with God is more intimate, if the prayer be privately offered up than if read by a priest in church. We should rather conclude, from

\* *A. I. Conversations*, part ii. p. 37.

† 'Rapt into still communion that transcends

The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.'—WORDSWORTH.

the example and teaching of Jesus, that the prayers which He approved were those offered up by the suppliant privately in the closet, and that He discountenanced the practice of praying in public.

It may be admitted that habit has made the Sunday services of the Established Church, however little profitable in any way as at present conducted, almost a necessity with the wealthier orders; but the gratification afforded to this limited class by the opportunity of going to church at stated times, and enjoying the satisfaction of feeling that they have discharged what they deem a religious duty, is hardly sufficient to justify the State in making so large an expenditure of the national funds on behalf of a fraction of the community when there is so much useful work requiring to be done. Although the practice of church-going has degenerated into little more than a formal ceremony, it is still supposed to have some kind of salutary influence on the character. 'Formal observances,' as remarked by the late Mr. Baden Powell, in his *Christianity without Judaism*, 'are often defended as being safeguards of better things; but this (he says) is often quite fallacious; the external services soon become substituted for the better things. Human nature clings to religious formalism, and especially to Sabbatism, as an easy mode of compounding for a worldly, if not for an irreligious life.' How many people one knows, very punctilious in their attention to their 'religious duties,' and thus it is presumed in some sort setting their consciences at rest, who at the same time are very neglectful of their duties to humanity, inconsiderate in their treatment of those dependent on them—their governesses, their servants, their tradespeople—in the thousand ways in which they may alleviate their too often hard lot.

I do not propose to suggest any scheme for the reform of the



Established Church. My ideal of a *National* Christian Church would be one entirely free from theological articles, founded on the two commandments emphatically announced by Jesus, namely, the love of God and the love of man. The constant aim and duty of the members of such a Church would be to study the laws and do the will of God—work being their highest worship, and self-culture and the service of their fellow-men the mode in which they manifest their love to God, the common Father of all. Those who desire a more distinctive creed would be left to associate themselves with one of the various denominational Churches which would still go on to exist—let us hope in diminishing numbers—each claiming for itself a special title to the name of Christian.

I am not blind to the great social advantages which the present organisation of the Church affords by placing in every parish throughout the country an educated gentleman, generally ready at least, if not always specially qualified, to give assistance in looking after the poor and in other ways. This part of the system might be retained in any truly national religious institution to be organised. Helpful men there might still be, though of a somewhat different stamp from those which the Church now provides—no longer cramped by the professional narrowness and ignorance of the world's business which ordinarily characterise our present clergymen—men conversant with the business of life, and able to advise and instruct the poorer and less informed of their parishioners. And, their time being less taken up with ceremonial duties, they would have leisure to devote themselves to doing good in the thousand ways that are sure to present themselves.

Nor do I undervalue the advantage to be derived from assembling together for religious worship. The practice of meeting at stated times to join in public worship, inspired by

just and elevated views of the Supreme Being and of the Divine government of the world, can hardly fail to have a salutary effect on the character. Many persons feel that they need to be thus led, as it has been somewhere expressed (I think by Mr. Martineau), 'to those fountains of spiritual light and strength which are requisite to prepare them for every needed work, brace them for all trial, give them tranquillity amid turmoil, and sustain them to do their duty as under the eye of the great Workmaster.' Indulging in common our aspirations after the better, we shall feel our faith quickened and strengthened when we perceive by how many others it is shared.

It need by no means be the sole or even the chief object of so assembling together to forget the business and the cares of this world and to fix the thoughts wholly on the life to come. Advantage should rather be taken of the opportunity thus afforded for eloquent preachers to recall to those engaged in the solemn exercise the great truths which ought to be ever present to their minds, and to form the rule of their moral conduct in this life. It should be the aim of a well-devised system of religious services to provide for calling to mind and solemnly impressing upon those present their duties in this life, reminding them how each is bound to take his share in the great work of helping on the world that has been committed to us, and that all are responsible (more or less, according to the gifts which have been bestowed upon them, and the opportunities which they have enjoyed) for much past neglect, and for the slow progress that has been made, and the sad amount of destitution and suffering which is still allowed to exist in the world.

Our aspiration after the higher life which we trust is in store for us, instead of having the effect of withdrawing our attention from the affairs of this world, should rather animate us for the

discharge of our duties connected with this life ; and in our aspiration after a future life we may reasonably indulge the hope that by the conscientious discharge of the duties incumbent on us here, and which we have the means of knowing, we may become in some degree qualified for that unknown higher existence which we hope for hereafter. What is to be aimed at in these religious gatherings, and indeed at all times, is to bring the spiritual into harmony with the physical world—to bring our aspirations after an hereafter into harmony with an enlightened and faithful discharge of our duties here.

In addition to the circumstance that it affords an opportunity for these religious gatherings, the value to the rich as well as to the poor of the Sunday as a day of rest and leisure and rational amusement can hardly be over-estimated ; and its observance as a holiday is on all accounts to be encouraged and insisted on. To the overworked labouring classes especially, the institution of the Sunday is of inestimable value, as affording an opportunity of recruiting their exhausted strength and restoring to them some degree of healthful vigour by cheerful relaxation of mind and body. In the exhaustion which they feel, the temptation to resort to hurtful stimulants is difficult to be resisted ; and it is of the highest moment that they should be withdrawn from this temptation by attractions of a kind which are not injurious to health. It is on this ground that it especially behoves the rulers of the land to see that provision be made for innocent amusement of the labouring classes on this their day of leisure. Parks and public gardens and—especially seeing how uncertain is our climate—picture galleries and museums, should, wherever possible, be provided. The taste for these should be encouraged in every way, not merely as a means of withdrawing the working classes from the public-house, but, as I prefer to say, with the view of cultivating in them a taste for higher and nobler pleasures.

It would almost seem as if there were a conspiracy among the higher classes (especially those making more than ordinary profession of religion) to drive their poorer brethren to resort to low and degrading pleasures, by discountenancing amusements of a more innocent kind, and making their day of rest as dull as possible.

Amusement is a thing too much despised by good people in this world: on Sunday especially it is supposed by them to partake of the nature of sin. Even so innocent and healthful a recreation as rowing on the Serpentine the authorities are constrained to prohibit on the Sunday, in deference to the religious spirit of the age, as it is called. What are we to think of the religion which makes such a prohibition necessary, or of the Church which lends its sanction to such puritanical austerity? There is nothing in the precepts or example of Jesus, nothing certainly in natural religion, to lend a sanction to this morbid feeling. Whilst on the one hand natural religion requires us to shrink from the discharge of no duty, it on the other hand does not require us (consistently with the discharge of that duty) to refrain from any innocent enjoyment which God has placed within our reach. When it is considered how conducive to health are exercise and cheerful occupation, and how dependent on health are morality and the efficient discharge of all the duties of life, it is difficult to understand how intelligent and benevolent persons can feel other than anxious to turn to good account in this way the enforced leisure of the Sunday.

It is common to assume that we are in the highest degree interested in being able to prove the truth of the Church's creed; to represent a firm belief in a future state of retribution as the main consolation of suffering virtue, the sole curb of powerful vice, the hope of the dying, and as especially needed to soften

the hard lot of the poor. 'It is,' says Mr. Lecky, 'the one romance of the poor.' But surely this is to take a very one-sided view of the case. No doubt the prospect of a future life, when rationally entertained, may be called the hope of the dying; but how often is that prospect, as our Church looks upon it, rather the despair of the dying. 'When,' as Miss Cobbe remarks, 'orthodox persons boast of the great comfort which their creed has been to the suffering and bereaved, we are bound to remember the misery, agony, madness, which that same creed has brought on thousands more.'

However much is to be said for the great scheme of salvation, we cannot consider it apart from the counter scheme of damnation, which all orthodox persons must admit to be the more fruitful of the two. When we think of the narrow gate, and of the few that enter in thereat, surely, in all reflective minds, terror must preponderate, if not for ourselves, at least for our relatives and friends. Trembling, fearful hope is about as high as any intelligent man, even at the best, could go; and when we consider the dreadful alternative which the orthodox scheme holds out, it surely would not be a bad exchange, were that the only alternative open to us, to be able to feel quite sure to escape the wrath to come in endless peace.

Better than such a belief would be the almost playful, affectionate equanimity with which Adrian addresses his soul on the approach of death:—

*Animula vagula, blandula,  
Hospes comesque corporis,  
Quæ nunc abibis in loca?  
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,  
Nec ut soles dabis joca.\**

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\* Thus imitated by Prior—

‘ Dear little pretty, fluttering thing,  
Must we no longer live together ?

But better, far, the bright hopefulness with which our own charming poetess, in a like playful mood, bids adieu to life :—

Life! we've been long together,  
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;  
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;  
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;  
Then steal away: give little warning;  
Choose thine own time,  
Say not good night, but in some brighter clime  
Bid me good morning.—BARBAULD.

To consider the scheme under the most favourable circumstances—as affecting, i.e., persons who have become in due course members of the Church—of the Established Anglican Church we will suppose—and have done everything necessary to entitle them to its privileges; if we take the orthodox doctrine of the Apostolic succession to be true, how fearfully uncertain must be their hopes. We must not forget that the scheme begins by assuming the universal damnation. This awful admission we must make if we accept the scheme, and then we are to trust to the Church to deliver us. To do this it must be, in the technical sense, a true Church. Now, considering the chances against an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles in the imposition of hands, and the awful consequences of a broken link, can we doubt that to a reflective person capable of estimating the probabilities of the case, it must be an unspeakable relief to be convinced that the chance of escaping damnation, with its fearful consequences of endless unutterable suffering, does not depend upon anything so infinitely uncertain.

And dost thou prune thy trembling wing  
To take thy flight thou know'st not whither?  
Thy humorous vein, thy pleasing folly,  
Neglected all and all forgot,  
And pensive wayward melancholy,  
Thou dread'st and hop'st thou know'st not what.'

But this is the most favourable view of the Church scheme. Even such uncertain chance of salvation as it holds out applies to the very limited number of persons who have become members of the true Church, and have complied with the prescribed conditions of salvation. We must, however, in estimating the value to mankind of the Christian dispensation as an exclusive scheme of salvation, take into consideration the case of the countless myriads who on that supposition are excluded from all chance of salvation, and are condemned to a state of unspeakable suffering through all eternity.

It does not mend the matter to say with Coleridge that it is a fearful mystery,\* and that he does not profess to comprehend it. Why should we glory in a faith (however steeped in mystery) which imputes to the Author of the universe a scheme which dooms to endless suffering ninety-nine hundredths of the human race? Happily, the scheme, as has been already observed, is in itself in the highest degree improbable. It is, moreover, founded on historic statements, which, if the laws of nature be, as the investigations of science all tend to show, uniform and invariable, cannot possibly be true. Not among the least of the benefactors of his race must be reckoned the man who shall succeed in convincing his fellow-creatures that this is so, and that they are not exposed to the fearful chances of an hereafter of unspeakable misery involved in all the orthodox systems of Christian doctrine, but that they may reasonably entertain the belief in immortality which cheered the closing hours of Socrates.†

\* 'I am born a child of wrath. This fearful mystery I pretend not to understand. I cannot even conceive the possibility of it, but I know that it is so. My conscience, the sole foundation of certainty, commands me to believe it, and would be itself a contradiction were it not so; and what is real must be possible.'—*Literary Remains*, i. 392.

† See Appendix.

As for religious fears being the sole curb of powerful vice, a topic much insisted on by our moralists and clergymen, experience has shown, and shows daily, how little it is to be relied on.\* The legal and constitutional restraint is the real curb intended by nature, though, as has already been explained, only to be discovered by a careful study of mankind, and after a long experience of the evils to which they are exposed from the arbitrary dispositions of men when entrusted with unlimited power.

Burke loved to dwell on the paramount importance of the religious restraint involved in the account hereafter to be rendered by all persons entrusted with power. It suited the arbitrary character of his mind† to look for this kind of control rather than to insist on constitutional restraints. He insisted on the value of religious establishments, not less as being suited to impress on the great and powerful a feeling of responsibility, than as being adapted to furnish occupation for their minds in the enforced idleness which he assumed to be the lot of the wealthy and the great. ‘Some charitable dole,’ he says, ‘is wanting to these our often very unhappy brethren to fill the gloomy void that reigns in minds that have nothing on earth to hope or to fear; something to relieve the killing languor and over-laboured lassitude of those who have nothing to do.’‡

Surely there is enough in this world of ours to afford interesting occupation for those who have ample means and

\* See Letter II. p. 100, where the general question of the aid to be derived by the earthly legislator from a supposed state of retribution hereafter is touched upon.

† Grattan said Burke was so fond of arbitrary power that he could not sleep upon his pillow unless he thought the king had a right to take it from under him. — *Recollections by Rogers*, p. 104.

‡ *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.



nothing to do; and Burke would have employed his extraordinary intellectual powers to more advantage in calling attention to the various ways in which these unhappy great ones might usefully employ the opportunities which their exalted position affords them, for the benefit of their less gifted brethren. In this exercise of their powers they might, perhaps, have recovered their cheerfulness, and possibly have found that there are other consolations on the approach of death, besides those held out by our Church. To look back upon a well-spent life in which, according to your strength and your opportunities you have taken your share in helping on the world; in alleviating suffering and increasing the means of well-being of your fellow-creatures through countless ages to come—for this may well happen to be the good fortune of those who well employ their extraordinary opportunities—is surely a sentiment which, when your powers are exhausted and you can no longer be useful to yourself or your fellow-creatures, would enable you to meet death with calmness and satisfaction.

Enough, if something from our hands have power  
To live and act and serve the future hour,  
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,  
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,  
We feel that we are greater than we know.—WORDSWORTH.

With regard to Mr. Lecky's 'One Romance of the Poor,' no doubt it has high sanction. We are told that the poor are blessed. According to the New Testament writers, Heaven is especially a place of compensation to them for their sufferings in this world. But is there not some fear that those who indulge in this kind of sentimentality may be content to rest there and neglect the real means of bettering the condition of the poor—to put them off with cheap promises of an hereafter instead of directing their energies to discover and apply the true remedy in this world?

What, then, are the conclusions at which we arrive? Does the Church afford any real help in solving the great problem of the world and of man's position there, his aims, and his duties? Is its doctrine founded in truth?

After the most careful consideration that I have been able to give to the matter, I can arrive at no other conclusion than that the dogmatic scheme which the Church upholds is not supported by any sufficient evidence, and that it rests on habit and authority alone; that it is inconsistent with the teachings of physical science, and that the views which it propounds of the divine nature are at variance with our highest conceptions of justice, benevolence, and morality. Not only does it not afford any satisfactory solution of the great problem that we have been considering, but it stands in the way of such hope as we otherwise might entertain of arriving at such a solution. It is this consideration alone which has induced me to offer my feeble aid to the movement of which there are indications on every side towards juster and more encouraging views of the Divine government of the world.

If, indeed, the Church's scheme could coexist with the higher and worthier conceptions of the universe and man's place in it, which are now penetrating the minds of thoughtful men; if these conceptions could grow quietly up under the shadow of the Church as now constituted, and the old dogmas could gradually die out and disappear without discussion, without passion, and without a struggle, I should gladly welcome such a consummation, and I should rejoice to see religious men and women spared the pain of doubt and conflict. But alas! this is not to be looked for. The Church, if sincere, must claim exclusive predominance for its scheme of Creation, Fall, and Redemption. If those dogmas are true, they must be paramount to everything else, and must displace all modes of thought and

action which are inconsistent with themselves. Learned and ingenious clergymen may, by importing their own notions into the Church formularies instead of deriving their opinions from them, and by attributing to those documents meanings which never entered into the minds of those who framed them, succeed in reconciling to the Church men who, though they feel unable to accept the views presented in her formularies, are reluctant to withdraw from her communion; and I am far from presuming to blame the excellent and liberal clergymen, who, in the difficult position in which they find themselves, thus strive to bring the old belief into harmony with modern ideas, and to facilitate the transition from an age of dogmatic faith to one of rational belief. It is only because I feel convinced that the orthodox and generally received doctrines of the Church—those deemed fundamental—stand in the way of progress, of truth, and of the real interests and well-being of mankind, and that so long as they are retained nothing better can take their place, and not simply because they are obsolete, that it appears to me necessary to get rid of them. The best of what we owe to Christianity itself will, as I have insisted, not perish with the dogmas of the Church. The goodness of Jesus; the love of man; self-sacrifice; tenderness to the weak; patience; humility; the relation of trust towards the universe and its Author and Governor which these virtues bring with them—all these will remain when the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Fall, of Incarnation and Redemption, have ceased to be regarded as objects of faith. Still less will truth, justice, and knowledge, which owe nothing to the Church, suffer from the extinction of a system of doctrine which has too often usurped their place. It is in order that there may be an open field for all these virtues; that our aspirations after the best, the highest, the holiest, may have unlimited

scope ; that man may be free to pursue that course of development which promises to raise him as far above his present state as it has already raised him above the level of the savage—it is with these positive aims and objects, and from no iconoclastic impulse of destruction, that I and those who share my views seek to divert the attachment and devotion of mankind from a false and profitless creed, and a decaying Church, to objects which are worthy of their highest hopes and most sacred affections.



## APPENDIX.

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For those who are not satisfied with the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, or as to its bearing (if proved) on the general resurrection of man, nor with the argument of St. Paul on this subject, the reasons in favour of a future life drawn from other sources, and especially the argument to be deduced from the universal longing for immortality and craving for spiritual communion with God are not without their value. The disposition to believe that death is a passage to a new phase of life with consciousness of personal identity—the longing for an hereafter and the craving for spiritual communion with God, so universal among the cultivated classes of all nations and in all ages as almost to be considered a part of our nature, has been deemed by many an irrefragable argument in support of the belief in a future state. The Creator, it is argued, would never have made this feeling a part of our nature if the object to which it is directed did not exist. By this feeling we are distinguished from the rest of created beings. It is man's prerogative; and in his higher stages of progressive improvement it becomes an assurance to him that he will survive death. This argument is urged with great force in a paper by Dr. Hinds, formerly Bishop of Norwich, published by Mr. Scott, of Ramsgate.\* 'The strength of the argument lies,' the Bishop insists, 'in our conception of the Divine nature as revealed to us in creation. To suppose that the Creator has made man with a strong desire as part of his nature, and that the object on which alone that desire can be

\* '*A Reply to the Question, Apart from Supernatural Revelation, What is Man's Prospect of Living after Death?*'

exercised does not exist, is as inconsistent with what we know of Him and His ways as to suppose that He might have given His creatures eyes when there was no visible object, or ears when there was no such thing as sound.' (p. 6.)

It has been attempted to throw ridicule upon the argument in favour of a future life founded on the longing desire implanted in us, and it is said we might as well expect a dinner to be provided because we are hungry. But that is to mistake the argument. It is not contended that because we are hungry a dinner may be expected to be provided; but that the fact of our being hungry—our longing for food—is evidence that it is intended that we should eat—that eating belongs to the constitution of our nature, and that if proper means be taken a dinner may be had and our longing satisfied. The longing was not without an object. So with the longing after a future life.

Mr. Greg, after full examination of the popular arguments in favour of a future existence, arrives at the conclusion that it is to the soul that we must look for a solution. 'The intellect,' he says, 'could never have discovered it, and can never prove it: the soul must have revealed it; must and does perpetually reveal it. It is a matter which comes properly within the cognizance of the soul—of that spiritual sense to which on such topics we must look for information, as we look to our bodily senses for information touching the things of earth—things that lie within their province. We never dream of doubting what *they* tell us of the external world, though a Berkeley should show us that their teaching is at variance with or indefensible by logic. We therefore at once cut the Gordian knot by conceding to the soul the privilege of instructing us as to the things of itself—we apply to the spiritual sense for information on spiritual things. We believe there is no other solution to the question.' . . . The only occasions on which a shade of doubt has passed over my conviction of a future existence have been when I have rashly endeavoured to

make out a case, to give a reason for the faith that is in me, to assign ostensible and logical grounds for my belief.—*Creed of Christendom*, p. 302.

Déscartes, 'the father of the experimental philosophy of the human mind,' as he has been called by Dugald Stuart, maintains that our knowledge of the soul is more intimate and certain than our knowledge of the body. It is not a matter to reason about. I doubt whether, on this subject, we can go beyond the emphatic declaration of *Yorick* on the occasion of his affecting interview with *Maria* in the neighbourhood of Moulins, of which an account is given in the *Sentimental Journey*, when, he says, 'I felt such indescribable emotions within me as I am sure could not be accounted for from any combination of matter and motion.

'I am positive I have a soul; nor can all the books with which materialists have pestered the world ever convince me of the contrary.'

We are all of us familiar with Addison's version of Plato's argument for the immortality of the soul, in the Soliloquy of *Cato*, commencing:—

It must be so; Plato, thou reasonest well!  
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality?  
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror  
Of falling into nought? Why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself and startles at destruction?  
'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us,  
'Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter  
And intimates eternity to man.\*

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\* Mr. Lecky, in his history of *Rationalism in Europe*, has beautifully expressed the view of the soul entertained by the school of Plato, as developed in the *Phædon*:—'That there exists in man an indivisible being, connected with, but essentially distinct from, the body, was the position which Socrates dwelt upon as one of the chief foundations of his hopes in the last hours of his life, and Cicero in the shadow of age; and the whole moral system of the school of Plato was based upon the distinction. Man, in their noble imagery, is the horizon line where the world of spirit and the world of matter touch. It is in his power to rise by the wings of the soul to communion with the gods, or to sink by the gravitation of the body to the level of the brute. It is the destiny of the soul to pass from state to state; all its knowledge is but remembrance, and its future condition must be determined by its present



Some degree of doubt must always rest on this question: such uncertainty is inseparable from the nature of the case, and we must be content with such amount of probability as the subject admits of. We cannot, by expressing an undoubting belief, make things more certain than they are. We can no more escape from the uncertainty by shutting our eyes to the difficulties of the case, and proclaiming our sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection, than the ostrich can escape danger by thrusting its head into the sand. What seems deserving of consideration is, whether it is not better to rest on arguments which, so far as they go, cannot be shaken, but on the contrary are rather likely to be strengthened with the progress of knowledge,\* than upon historical evidence

tendency. The soul of the man who aspires only to virtue, and who despises the luxury and the passions of earth, will be emancipated at last from the thralldom of matter, and, invisible and unshackled, will drink in perfect bliss in the full fruition of wisdom. The soul of that man who seeks his chief gratification in the body, will, after death, be imprisoned in a new body, will be punished by physical suffering, or, visible to the human eye, will appear upon the earth in the form of a ghost to scare the survivors amid their pleasures.'—I. 371.

The same conception is beautifully expressed in *Comus*, where the 'Attendant Spirit' speaks of the men of Earth, who

' With low-thoughted care,  
Confin'd and pester'd in this pin-fold here,  
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,  
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,  
After this mortal change, to her true servants,  
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.  
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire  
To lay their just hands on that golden key  
That opes the palace of eternity.'

\* Miss Cobbe, in her *Dawning Lights*, says: 'We have heard a great man of science say, from his own experience, "Every step I have advanced in knowledge has lightened the physical difficulties of the doctrine of immortal life, by revealing to me more and more the infinite possibilities of nature."' (p. 46.)

Can we say that the sublime conception of Blanco White is not within these possibilities?—

'Mysterious night, when first our parent knew  
Thee by report divine, and heard thy name,  
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame?  
This glorious canopy of light and blue.  
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,  
Bathed in the rays of the great setting sun,  
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,

of supernatural facts which, if experience be any guide, is sure to give way before the progress of science.

Our greatest thinkers, philosophers as well as poets, have strongly held to the belief of an existence beyond the grave.

Göthe clung to this belief, but he thought it a mistake to rest it on what he calls a legend. ‘Der Mensch,’ he says, ‘soll an Unsterblichkeit glauben; er hat dazu ein Recht, es ist seiner Natur gemäss, und er darf auf religiöse Zusage bauen. Wenn aber der Philosoph den Beweis für die Unsterblichkeit unserer Seele aus einer Legende hernehmen will, so ist es sehr schwach und will nicht viel heissen. Die Ueberzeugung unserer Fortdauer entspringt mir aus dem Begriff der Thätigkeit: denn wenn ich bis an mein Ende rastlos wirke, so ist die Natur verpflichtet mir eine andere Form des Daseyns anzuweisen, wenn die jetzige meinem Geist nicht ferner auszuhalten vermag.’—*Gespräche mit Eckermann*, ii. 56.\* In another place he says: ‘I am fully convinced that our spirit is a being of a nature quite indestructible.’

D’Alembert shared this notion of indestructibility. ‘Nous avons,’ he says, ‘de très-fortes raisons de croire que notre âme subsistera éternellement, parce que Dieu ne pourrait la détruire sans l’anéantir,† et que l’anéantissement de ce qu’il produit une fois ne paraît pas être dans les vues de sa sagesse.’

And lo! creation widened in man's view.  
 Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed  
 Within thy beams, oh Sun? or who could find,  
 Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,  
 That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind?  
 Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?  
 If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?’

\* ‘Man should believe in immortality; he has a right to this belief: it corresponds with the wants of his nature, and he may believe in the promises of religion. But if the philosopher tries to deduce the immortality of the soul from a legend, that is very weak and inefficient. To me the eternal existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity; if I work on incessantly till my death, nature is bound to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer sustain my spirit.’—*Oxenford's translation*.

† Is it quite clear that this is so? Can we assume that the *substratum* of

Wieland, in the words which he puts into the mouth of the aged Apollonius, in his *Agathodämon*,\* probably expresses his own view of an hereafter. 'I look,' he says, 'tranquilly on death . . . . I look upon it as a good genius who, at the worst, will lead me to eternal rest, but probably to the place of my future destination (Bestimmung). The beautiful order and wise fitness of things which I see prevail in the whole of nature do not allow me to doubt for a moment that this destination will be adapted to my strength and my inner constitution. This is all that I can know, and it is enough for my repose. Meanwhile, why may it not be allowed to the imagination to go further, and, with harmless dreams woven out of the dim glimpses and anticipations of the future world, to soothe the impatience of the waiting? Be it that the weary seafarer, who after a lengthened voyage longs again to see land, sees in calm weather, in the far horizon, a vision of the air which he takes to be an enchanted island; his mistake injures no one, and procures him some cheerful moments.' (p. 336.)†

the phenomena of the soul (whatever it be) is indivisible? The body, we know, continues to exist though in a state of dissolution, its atoms going to form other bodies. Why should there not be an analogous dissolution of the soul, —supposing it to be a thing apart from the body—its elements going to form other souls?

Plato's conception of the immortality of the soul or mind, includes pre-existence as well as post-existence. He holds, that on death the soul passes into another body, and that we bring into the world reminiscences of its former existence. (See Grote's *Plato*, ii. 18.) Wordsworth has in some sort adopted the notion. He says :—

'Our birth is but a sleep, and a forgetting;  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.'

\* Leipzig, 1799.

† Thus Wordsworth :—

Hence in a season of calm weather,  
Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea

Lord Byron, although constitutionally of a sceptical turn of mind, loved to indulge the hope of communion in another world with the mighty spirits of past ages :—

Yet if, as holiest men have deemed, there be  
A land of souls beyond that sable shore,  
To shame the doctrine of the Sadducees  
And sophists madly vain of dubious lore,  
How sweet it were in concert to adore  
With those who made our mortal labours light ;  
To hear each voice we feared to hear no more ;  
Behold each mighty shade revealed to sight,  
The Bactrian, Samian sage, and all who taught the right.

‘Truer all we feel than all we know,’ says one of our minor poets.\* Moore *felt* his immortality in the contemplation of Mont Blanc at eventide :—

Mighty Mont Blanc ! thou wert to me,  
That moment, with thy brow in heaven,  
As sure a sign of deity  
As e’er to mortal gaze was given.  
Nor ever—  
Can I the deep-felt awe forget,  
The ecstasy that thrilled me then !  
’Twas all that consciousness of power  
And life beyond this mortal hour,  
That proud assurance of our claim  
To rank among the sons of light,  
Mingled with shame, ah bitter shame !  
At having risked that splendid right  
For aught that earth in all its range  
Of glories offers in exchange.  
And should my spirit’s hope grow weak,  
Should I, oh God ! e’er doubt Thy power,  
This mighty scene again I’ll seek  
At the same calm and glowing hour ;  
And here at the sublimest shrine  
That nature ever reared to Thee  
Rekindle all that hope divine  
And *feel* my immortality.

With our laureate, faith is feeling in antagonism with

Which brought us hither ;  
Can in a moment travel thither ;  
And see the children sport upon the shore  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

\* Kenyon.

reason. His firm conviction springs from the indignant feeling of the heart at the doubt suggested by reason :—

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep  
I heard a voice 'Believe no more,'  
And heard an over-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the godless deep ;  
A warmth within the heart would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part,  
And, like a man in wrath, the heart  
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'

Wordsworth trusts to recover his youthfulness in the eternal summer of another world :—

Sin-blighted though we are, yet we,  
The reasoning sons of men,  
From one oblivious winter free  
Shall rise and breathe again,  
And in eternal summer lose  
Our three-score years and ten.

Who does not sympathise with the sentiment of those lines of Lockhart, addressed to Mrs. Norton, and published in the notice of his life in the *Quarterly Review*, for October, 1864 :—

Yet 'tis an old belief,  
That on some solemn shore  
Beyond this sphere of grief  
Dear friends shall meet once more ;

Beyond the sphere of time  
And sin and fate's control,  
Serene in endless prime  
Of body and of soul.

That creed I fain would keep  
That hope I'll not forego ;  
Eternal be the sleep  
Unless to waken so.

As to what is to be the condition of man in a future state there will be endless variety of conjecture, with more or less of anxiety, depending upon the temperament of each individual. 'I know,' says one of our popular novelists, 'that my soul shall live for ever ; I know that there is that within me over which death has no power ; but alas ! can I rejoice in my immortality when I know not where or under what

conditions those endless æons will roll themselves away into the past.\*

There is, however, no just ground for anxiety. From the unmistakable indications here of beneficence in the scheme of the world, we may reasonably trust that our existence hereafter (if existence we are to have) will not be an unhappy one.

Hope humbly then, with trembling pinions soar :  
Wait the great teacher Death, and God adore :  
What future bliss He gives not thee to know  
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now:  
Hope springs eternal in the human breast,  
Man never is but always to be blest ;  
The soul uneasy and confined from home  
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.—POPE.

It is not necessary to suppose that our condition in a future life is wholly and *finally* dependent on our conduct here, which, however, is the Church's doctrine, and is one of the difficulties in the way of the reception of that doctrine. The future life may be assumed to be a higher state of existence, but the analogy of what goes on here would suggest that there would be similar means of progressive improvement in the world to come. We may well suppose that in a future state of existence the same moral discipline will be carried on as in the present world ; and so, progressively, all may ultimately attain a degree of perfection of which we can at present form only a very imperfect idea. This was the opinion of Bishop Butler. He thought that the individual would pass into the future life with all the dispositions and habits which he had formed in his previous course, producing misery if bad ; happiness if good ; but with this advantage, that the circumstances in which he will be placed will have an irresistible tendency to correct bad habits and encourage good ones, so that in time none but good habits will exist and happiness be universal.

Nothing is more striking than the inequality of conditions

\* ' Hark, my gay friend ! that solemn toll  
Tells the departure of a soul :  
'Tis gone : that's all we know, not where  
Or how the unbodied soul doth fare.'—STERNE.

in this life—the means of improvement of some being so much greater than those of others, these arising mainly from the circumstances of their birth, over which therefore they have no control, and for which they cannot be responsible. This inequality is infinitely increased if we suppose our condition hereafter to be permanently dependent on the degree of progress that we have made in this life. And it does not get over the difficulty to say that it will depend not on the progress actually made, but on our disposition to improve here, because that disposition is dependent very much upon the accident of birth.

